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**SNAIL'S PACE**  
by Algis Budrys



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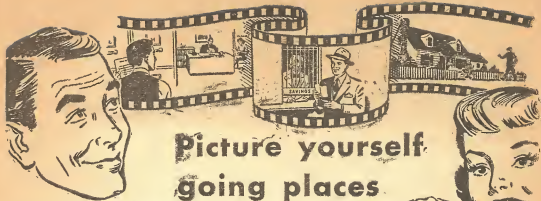
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**YEAR OF THE SIX  
MILLIONTH STUDENT**

# Dynamic Science Fiction

Volume  
One  
Number  
Five  
October  
1953

Cover by Alex Schomberg  
(illustrating "Snail's Pace")

ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

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They gave life to millions, at the cost of rotting death to themselves.

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*Illustrations by Luros, Murphy, Orban, and Sibley*

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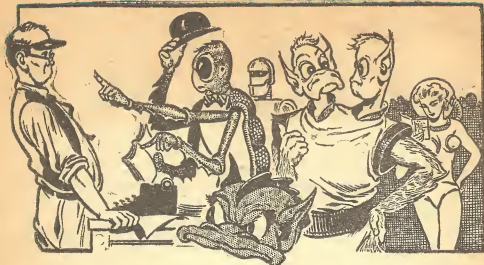
"I was a high school student when I enrolled. My friends began to bring their Radios to me. I realized I had a profit of \$500 by the time I completed the course." — John Hepper, Nitro, West Va.

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The ABC's of SERVICING

How to Be a Success in RADIO-TELEVISION



# THE LOBBY

Where the Readers and the Editor Talk Things Out

(heading by Milton Luros)



**B**OB MADLE'S reference to the "Tremaine period" in "Twenty Years Ago in Science-Fiction", reminds me of an editorial that appeared in *Astounding* nearly twenty years ago. It made an impression on me then, and I've never forgotten it. In his general comment, Tremaine noted that he strove for balance, adding that too many magazines (and he wasn't limiting his reference to science-fiction) suffered from *sameness*—that, he contended, was what often happened when the man in the editorial chair really wasn't an editor.

On the other hand, my worthy colleague, Mr. Philip St. John, shrugs his

shoulders at the matter of balance; he just wants good stories, he says—and if all the tales in a particular issue bear a sort of family resemblance, no harm's done. St. John hasn't been editing as long as Tremaine had been at the time he made the comment in the paragraph above; but from what I've seen of Sir Philip's efforts, I'd say he's entirely deserving of the editorial title.

At this point, let's take a look at that term "balance"; perhaps the two gentlemen are not contradicting each other—it may be that Tremaine had something different in mind after all.

I think he did. "Sameness" is not to be taken as categorically undesirable. We expect all the stories in *Dynamic* to be "the same" if the "sameness" quality is restricted to "science fiction"—just as we expect all

[Turn To Page 8]



# Now! The Amazing Facts about

# BALDNESS

## ...AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT



The following facts are brought to the attention of the public because of a widespread belief that nothing can be done about hair loss. This belief has no basis in medical fact. Worse, it has condemned many men and women to needless baldness by their neglect to treat certain accepted causes of hair loss.

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1. Alopecia from diseases of the scalp
2. Alopecia from other diseases or from an improper functioning of the body
3. Alopecia of the aged (senile baldness)
4. Alopecia areata (loss of hair in patches)
5. Alopecia of the young (premature baldness)
6. Alopecia at birth (congenital baldness)

Senile, premature and congenital alopecia cannot be helped by anything now known to modern science. Alopecia from improper functioning of the body requires the advice and treatment of your family physician.

**BUT MANY MEDICAL AUTHORITIES NOW BELIEVE A SPECIFIC SCALP DISEASE IS THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF HAIR LOSS.** This disease is called Seborrhea and can be broadly classified into two clinical forms with the following symptoms:

1. **DRY SEBORRHEA:** The hair is dry, lifeless, and without gloss. A dry flaky dandruff is usually present with accompanying itching. Hair loss is considerable and increases with the progress of this disease.
2. **OILY SEBORRHEA:** The hair and scalp are oily and greasy. The hair is slightly sticky to the touch and has a tendency to mat together. Dandruff takes the form of head scales. Scalp is usually itchy. Hair loss is severe with baldness as the end result.

Many doctors agree that to **NEGLECT** these symptoms of **DRY and OILY SEBORRHEA** is to **INVITE BALDNESS**.

Seborrhea is believed to be caused by three germ organisms — *staphylococcus albus*, *pitryosporum ovale*, and *acnes bacillus*.

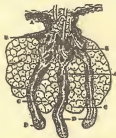
These germs attack the sebaceous gland causing an abnormal working of this fat gland. The hair follicle, completely surrounded by the enlarged diseased sebaceous gland, then begins to atrophy. The hair produced becomes smaller and smaller until the hair follicle dies. Baldness is the inevitable result. (See illustration.)

But seborrhea can be controlled, particularly in its early stages. The three germ organisms believed to cause seborrhea, can and should be eliminated before they destroy your normal hair growth.

A post-war development, Comate Medicinal Formula kills these three germ organisms on contact. Proof of Comate's germ-killing properties has been demonstrated in laboratory tests recently conducted by one of the leading testing laboratories in America. (Complete report on file and copies are available on request.)

When used as directed, Comate Medicinal Formula controls seborrhea—stimulates the flow of blood to the scalp—helps stop scalp itch and burn—improves the appearance of your hair and scalp—helps **STOP HAIR LOSS** due to seborrhea. Your hair looks more attractive and alive.

You may safely follow the example of thousands who first were skeptical, then curious, and finally decided to avail themselves of Comate Medicinal Formula.



### DESTRUCTION OF HAIR FOLLICLES

Caused By Seborrhea

A — Dead hairs; B — Hair-destroying bacteria; C — Hyperplastic sebaceous glands; D — Atrophic follicles.

### A Few of the Many Grateful Expressions By Users of Comate Medicinal Formula

"My hair was coming out for years and I tried everything. Nothing stopped it until I tried Comate. Now my hair has stopped coming out. It looks so much thicker. My friends have noticed my hair and they all say it looks so much better."

—Mrs. R. E. J., Stevenson, Ala.

"Your hair formula got rid of my dandruff; my head does not itch any more. I think it is the best of all of the formulas I have used."

—E. E., Hamilton, Ohio.

"Your formula is everything you claim it to be and the first 10 days trial fired me of a very bad case of dry seborrhea."

—J. E. M., Long Beach, Calif.

"I do want to say that just within five days I have obtained a great improvement in my hair. I do want to thank you and the Comate Laboratories for producing such a wonderful and amazing formula."

—M. M., Johnston, Pa.

"I have found almost instant relief. My itching has stopped with one application."

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—R. W., Lonsdale, R. I.

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—L. W. W., Galveston, Tex.

"This formula is everything if not more than you say it is. I am very happy with what it's doing for my hair."

—T. J., Las Cruces, New Mexico

"I find it stops the itch and retards the hair fall. I am thankful for the help it has given me in regard to the terrible itching."

—R. B. L., Philadelphia, Pa.

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—Mrs. J. L., Lisbon, Ga.

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the stories in a sports magazine to be the "same"—that is, all sports stories. (And if the title of the magazine is *Baseball Tales* or *Interplanetary Stories*, then your field is obviously going to be still more limited.)

However, balance is still possible; if, for example, it's a baseball story magazine, and several stories in a particular issue deal with a pitcher who's trying to make a comeback, then you have a poorly-balanced issue. If it's a detective story magazine, restricted to "whodunits", and in the main stories, the culprit turns out to be the luscious gal who enlisted the aid of the private eye, then you have a poorly-balanced issue. If it's an interplanetary story magazine, and a number of tales in a given issue deal with knobby-headed critters on Ganymede, then the balance is off. There you have the kind of "sameness" that I think Tremaine was speaking of—where two or more stories are so similar that the second and third read like slight variations of the first. I won't go so far as to assert that Mr. St. John would surely agree on this point; but I've noticed that his *practice*—whatever he may preach—suggests that he does agree.

One of the things about science-fiction that I've found most fascinating is the immense latitude possible, even within such restrictions as rocket stories, interplanetary stories, and so on. Now and then the best of us have days when we had better stayed in bed (or circumstances just get beyond control), so that an issue will come out with several stories so similar as to spoil the effect of each one individually; I think that even Tremaine had this trouble at least once. One swallow doesn't make a drunkard, however.

I try for balance, and I think that most of my colleagues do, too. One thing we're up against is a tendency toward cycles in manuscript-submissions; it's as if, every now and then,

several dozen good authors all decide that now is the time to try a particular type of story—and ye ed will suddenly find himself swamped with submissions of that type, while the pickings on anything else get prodigiously small. Fortunately, this sort of thing isn't happening all the time—otherwise the incidence of raving madness amongst editors would be much higher. (At this point, some author wants to know if he could tell the difference.)

You seek balance not only in story-type (so far as plot, characterization, and background go), but also in weight, breadth, and tone. A single bit of humor or plain whimsy; a tale that is little more than narrative, but which has scope; a mood piece—these things set against action, seriousness of idea and treatment, grimness or optimism—all go into the elements of balance. One doesn't hold out for "perfect balance", every time, any more than one expects each and every story to follow a textbook chart on perfect story construction; such only guarantees frustration and indicates a sad lack of reality-grasp on the part of he who expects it. But even if you miss the mark, you'll do better in the long run, if you know what you're shooting at.

Turning the spotlight on our authors, now, we have the following scribes with us, this issue:

M. C. PEASE, who was first seen in the April 1949 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*, with a short story entitled, "Devious Weapon".

ALGIS BUDRYS, who has become worthy of the phrase "name writer" within a year, and whose "Stand Watch in the Sky" is in the September issue of *Future*.

FRANK BELKNAP LONG, the veteran author of this issue. The impressive list of titles to his credit in the "Index of Science Fiction Magazines" only tells part of the story. He

[Turn To Page 57]



# NEW BODIES FOR OLD!

**I've Made New Men Out of  
Thousands of Other Fellows...**

**"Here's what I did for  
THOMAS MANFRE...and  
what I can do for you!"**

*—Charles Atlas*

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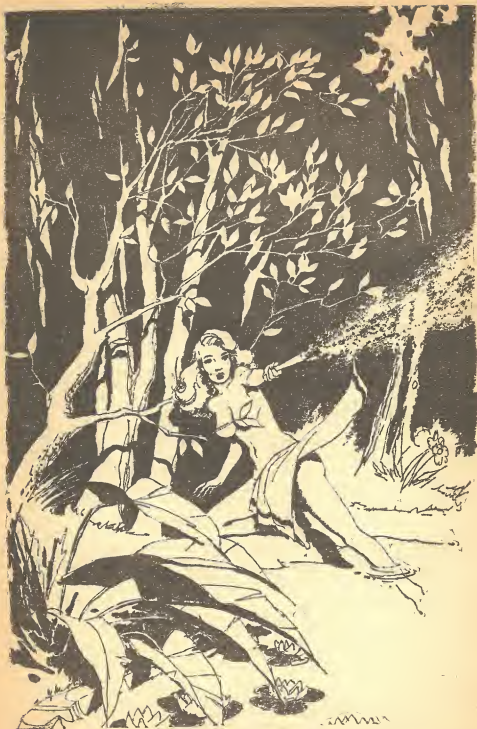
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Too late, Sintor realized that the girl had picked up a nerve-whip. He tried to duck, but found himself paralyzed, as stabbing pain flowed over him...





The Federation was ready to write off the planet Pelton, now that a substitute for Seekar's Lilly had been found. Seekar's Lilly — whence came the cure for cancer — whose dust-like pollen was the deadliest narcotic known. Now no one needed the lilly — but Sintor wanted to find out something: how were people driven to harvest this flower on Pelton, to give life to others at the cost of rotting death to themselves?

## TEMPLE OF DESPAIR

Novelet of Worlds to Come

by M. C. Pease

*(illustrated by Don Sibley)*

**S**INTOR was ugly—ugly as a caricature of a man. Twisted and ill-shapen, born with a sneer that seemed bred of the evil of space, only his eyes were different; humor lay in them and evil has no humor. In those eyes were light where there should have been only blackness; in them was a knowledge of beauty.

He sat, twisted uncomfortably into the chair that was built in one corner of the spaceship's stateroom. Over his shoulder, through a porthole, came the dim light of a thousand unknown suns, but he paid them no attention; he simply sat and read.

The door to the stateroom opened and a man came in. He wore the uniform of a Captain in the Navy of the Federation. Tall and virile, with an athlete's snug compactness, he was a strange contrast to Sintor. But, by the eyebrow he lifted at Sintor as he stretched out on the bunk, he showed the knowledge of an ancient friendship.

Sintor said nothing, nor did he so much as glance up from his book, until the other was thoroughly settled. Then, with a somewhat elaborate sigh, he raised his eyes and said, "Come in Ikkan; come in and have a seat."

"Nope, can't do it," Ikkan drawled, removing his shoes. "An officer's not allowed to mingle with the riff-raff. Wouldn't think of being here at all except for business."

"Business? Then please go away."

"Can't. Wish I could; my bunk's better than yours," the Captain said. "But we drop you off in an hour. Got to make sure everything's set."

"We are that close to Pelton?" Sintor asked in mild surprise.

"Yes," Ikkan said. "Are you all set? Do you know the program?"

"Of course," Sintor replied. "It is quite simple. I borrow the space dingy and float down whither I wilt—which will not be far from where the Tradeship lands. You then proceed to make a routine check of Pelton—but without landing. You will be on the Tradeship on its next trip, which should be in about ten days. If I do not show up, you will return again on the next trip ninety days or so later. If I don't show up then, you will report me to headquarters as lost. Quite simple."

"I doubt it," Ikkan answered. "Things are always simple when you

start. But comes the end of your assignment and not even the Commissioner himself can figure out what happened. However, that's beside the point. Got your identification?"

"Yes," Sintor said. "I know the code. 'The impossibility of providing pseudo time-invariant channels of communication between barbarians causes the development of non-topological culture on Pelton.' It sounds plausible."

"It does," Ikkan said, "but it actually isn't. There are no non-topological cultures. And in fact there can be no culture at all without a 'pseudo time-invariant channel of communication.' It is quite impossible for any culture to exist without some kind of topologic invariance. Each person in a culture has to be in some kind of known relation to other people in it. And the culture is made stable only by the stability of those relations. If there is no topology—no pattern of stable relations—there can be no culture. So, as any good identifying code, it sounds good but means nothing."

"That's good," Sintor said.

"And will you remember it?" the Captain asked. "Or will that be asking too much of your feeble mind?"

"You touch me on my vanity," Sintor said. "My mind, sir, is brilliant; it is, in fact, my one great shining virtue. And now go twiddle your knobs and be a captain while I change my clothes and otherwise prepare to give my all for glory."

"I'd rather stay here," Ikkan replied. Besides, before you die, I want to learn what made you a policeman."

"A policeman?" Sintor came as close as he could to smiling. "It was either that or be a crook; with my face, no other profession would have me."

"Well, why aren't you a crook, then?"

"I don't know," Sintor sounded puzzled. "I really don't; pure perverseness, I guess. I came from the slums of space, you know. Any time I hear of



any of my old boyhood chums, they've gone the twisted road. But I think maybe that's the reason; maybe I decided to fight my world—the world I came from was a crooked one, so I am on the law's side. Sort of a double negative being positive." He chuckled.

"It's a good thing," Iklan said. "You'd have been too good a crook."

"Maybe," Sintor said. "Except that my face would make it difficult. Too easily seen, too hard to forget."

"Should think that would make it as difficult for you to be a detective, too." The Captain's voice was idle.

"No. Surprisingly, not." Sintor shook his head. "In fact, I rather think it's one of my strongest points—next to my brain, of course. The point is that nobody, seeing me, can think that I'm not a crook."

"But you're so easy to identify!"

"Even that's a help," Sintor said. "It works on kind of a reverse logic. They figure the Service would never have an operator who was so easy to remember; being what I am, I cannot be an operator. So...I must be the crook I tell them I am. Simple, though wrong."

"Eventually they find out their error," Iklan argued.

"Yep," Sintor agreed, "and some even live to regret it."

Iklan chuckled in response. "I know what you mean. I know some of your record. But I still think you'd do better with not quite so astonishing a mug. Why don't you let the doctors work you over? Who knows—you might get to enjoy the normal life."

**S**INTOR rose slowly from his chair. His eyes burned for a moment, and then he spoke. "No. I don't want it. Maybe I'm being perverse, but I do not want to be 'normal'." His voice was level, but grated. "At the age of four or five, I knew I was different. This is hard on a kid, bitterly hard, but I learned to take it. I learned to take it, and I learned to cram it down

the throat of anyone who didn't like it. And when I learned that, then I found I had something. I am me—the ugliest man in space. Maybe that's not as good as being the handsomest man, or the cleverest, or the bestest in some other way. But at least it's something—and being only "normal" isn't. I'm unique, and I intend to stay that way."

"That seems rather silly," Iklan's voice was carefully quiet. "After all, as you point out, you have that wonderful brain. Maybe you can be the cleverest guy in space, but nobody's going to think of it when they see your puss."

Sintor relaxed and laughed. "I'm afraid, sir, you do not understand me. It is true my brain is astonishing—perhaps unique—but not, I'm afraid, in any way that would impress people. Now my face most certainly does impress them... But tell me—just what is this all about? It's a strange conversation for a sendoff, and I doubt if it's accidental."

The Captain swung himself up to a sitting position. "No, it's not. But the Commissioner would like to see you chuck this."

"Chuck it?" The agent gaped. "Chuck it? If he wants me to chuck it, what'd he send me for?"

"He didn't," Iklan answered. "You were the one who decided to come. The Federation's ready to write Pelton off; you were the one who insisted we ought to find out how Pelton worked before we scrapped it. Remember?"

Sintor thought a moment, and then nodded. "Yeah, I guess that's right. But, damn it all, how can they just write it off? What about the people there? Do we just forget what they've done for us? How many of them have died so the Federation can have its Radinol? Do we just forget them—let them rot in their graves and let other tens of thousands follow them?...

"And anyway, I think that we should learn just how they do it. For science if for nothing else."

"What do you mean 'how they do it'?" Iklan asked. "The stuff is easy to grow, isn't it?"

"It is, if you don't give a damn," Sinter said. "Seekar's Lilly—a pretty flower, they say, with pollen that floats like dust. It carries the strongest narcotic known to man, and also carries the only cure for cancer. Life and death, so twisted together that you cannot grow the one without the other. Think of it man! Think of it and weep! Picture the men—or maybe women—going out to gather the precious dust, gathering it in from each flower of the field. Collecting it so that all over the galaxy men need no longer die of cancer. Collecting it and dying—dying in agony of addiction to the drug that's in the pollen of the flower.

"What's the problem, do you ask? It is simple. What is the social structure that can make these people do this? What is its secret? There is a secret, there, you know. They only let us land in one small valley, at very certain times, and threaten us with no more Radinol if we do not obey. When we land, it is only priests we see. Where are the people and what are they like? And why, in exchange for the pollen, do they ask for food and cloth, and such other basic things—in quantities to feed and clothe the world?

"It sounds as if they make no effort to provide themselves with basic needs. They could; it is a fertile world, so why don't they? There is a fascinating problem on Pelton; and even though we do not need them now, even though we've bred a variant species of the lily with less lethal pollen—and built a new technology to handle even that mild species—yet I think that we should find out how this culture works. It must be strange. The crop they harvest must be paid for in



fantastic measure of drug-rotted bodies—and yet the priests can get the people to pay the price. How?"

"Do we really have to know?" Iklan asked. "We have the milder species now, and the technology to handle it. We no longer need depend on Pelton for the stuff. Is Pelton important?"

"It is to me, at least," Sinter replied. "Maybe the Federation does not need to know, but there is something in me that does. I think of those who have died down there—died as slaves to the priesthood so that we could have the medicine. Now that we can tell the priests to go to hell, I don't want any more to die. And maybe I can stop it."

"It would be nice to know," Iklan agreed. "But is the knowing worth the price of finding out? Seven operators have gone in; not one has come out. They seem to have died without even having the priests know they'd been there—at least we never got a protest about them. So what do you have that those seven didn't?"

"Plenty," Sinter answered. "A very ugly puss for one thing. And a brain that, as far as I can make out, is unique."

"But how do you expect to use your wonderful brain? You have no knowledge of Pelton, nor any special gadgets. And however good your brain is, it still needs data to compute and tools to act with."

"Maybe, maybe not," Sintor answered. "But I am not the naked babe you make me out. It's true, my data on Pelton is extremely meager. But, on the other hand, I have a vast amount of data on what makes other worlds and other peoples work; there is no reason to suppose that that data will not be true on Pelton."

"You say I have no weapon. But you are wrong. I *have* a weapon; it is myself—and I am a weapon that I know how to use to very good advantage. My instincts were trained in the slums from which I came; I have kept them in razor keenness in the human jungles I have known. Ikkan, my friend, I am a master of the perverse—the unexpected action or unaccounted silence. And few there are that can deal with perverse action or stop the one who uses it. I am far from weaponless."

Ikkan got to his feet. He shook his head in a gesture half mocking, half admiring. "You are, of course a stubborn fool. You are stubborn in insisting on going ahead, in spite of what I or the Commissioner say. You are a fool in being willing to go at all in the face of the obvious odds. You are also romantic since you are doing it for the people of Pelton. Either that or for science—an equally romantic reason. You are a romantic stubborn fool and I love you; be lucky." He turned and left without further sign or word.

SINTOR stood for a while in the protection of the forest, studying the country before him, his mind coldly analytical and his eyes observant. Hills in the distance blocked his view; but in between lay rolling grasslands. Under the hills was a hut from which smoke curled; around the hut were

some few specks that might have been cattle. Before him lay a road that followed the edge of the forest as far as he could see in both directions—but otherwise, it was a pleasantly wild land. Peaceful, but untamed; a land adapted only to a nomadic precivilization; a gentle, if primitive, culture.

Here lay no hint of the brutal and terrifying domination that there must be on this world. No hint at all of the whips the priests must have to make people gather the dust of Seekar's Lilly at the cost of broken lives and bodies.

Even the road gave no hint of anything but primitive hardship. Two ruts pounded deep through the topsoil winding together along the easiest path. Dodging boulders and bushes. Leisurely, with the faith of the uncivilized that tomorrow will follow today. Peaceful and without fear.

No one was in sight, so Sintor stepped out onto the road. As a last-minute check, he looked down over his robe. This was the dress of a priest, he knew. The priests were the only people the Service knew, their only contact being through the Tradeship with the priests. He was unhappy at the thought. He would have preferred the clothes of a peasant, but there was nothing for it; the robe would have to do.

He thought a bit wryly that if he had a weapon, it could easily be concealed under the single baggy piece that was the robe. But Sintor did not have a weapon. There was not anything at all on him to say that he was not of this world—not even so much as a knife. It was so he preferred to work. Weapons, he thought, were crutches for a good investigator. A man should rely on his wits for survival—not on any feeble blaster. A man's most potent weapon was his brain, besides which all others failed. And, Sintor thought, his own brain was a very potent weapon indeed.

Besides, his element of perversity made him refuse to display the sign of

weakness that he considered a weapon to be.

So, although it was a pity not to use the opportunities presented by the robe, there was no help for it. Sintor turned his face to the right and started to walk along the road. In that direction, he knew, lay the valley used by the Tradeship. In that direction lay his ultimate rendezvous with Iklan.

As he plodded along, he was suddenly aware of a voice in the distance behind. Stooping as if to pick up a stone, he glanced back down the road. There was no one in sight, but that told him little. Not far behind him, the road bent around the point of the forest; he could not see beyond. Straightening up, Sintor still saw nothing. He moved to a nearby boulder and sat down, as if for a moment's rest, while he waited for the owner of the voice to appear.

In a minute, he saw an oxlike animal pulling a wagon. As the wagon itself came into view, he saw it was filled high with some kind of vegetables, and driven by a man sitting on a high seat at the front. The driver was a man of powerful build, the typical frame of the peasant. His eyes were sullen and discontented, and there was a smoldering hatred in them. Beside him there rode a boy. The lad who was about half grown, was not handsome, nor did he seem intelligent. He sat there, apathetic, dull, a sharp contrast to the brutal force of the man who, one might judge, was probably his father.

As Sintor sat on the boulder observing and analyzing what he saw, he could spot the moment when the driver first saw him. It was marked by a disinterested glance, at first. Then with a double-take, the driver's eyes swung back to him with surprise. The peasant stood up on the wagon and looked at him and all around, studying particularly the forest. Then, with a sudden grin, the driver bent down, reaching behind the seat of the wagon.

And when he straightened up, his arm flashed up and out.

Sintor acted with pure instinct. He dove flat on the ground, and heard the stone the driver had thrown shatter on the boulder where he had sat. He snapped himself over, gathering his feet under him in one efficient move, then dove into the forest and behind a tree. And as he did, a second stone plowed up the dirt beside him. He heard his attacker shout: "Dog of a priest, you will die!"

Sintor blinked his eyes in momentary thought, wondering how best to tackle this; apparently, the priests were not exactly popular. It occurred to him that the only strategy open was to counterattack, so he roared back: "Imbecile beast of a peasant! I am no priest. Nor have I any better love for them than you do. Are you so simple-minded as to let my robe confuse you? Have you no wit at all?"

"I say you are a priest, and I say you die," was the answer, but it did not sound so sure.

"Put down your stones," Sintor called, "and let me speak in peace. A man with one eye could see that I am not a priest, but you do not. Have you then no eyes? Put down your stones and let me see if you have even a single ear that's open."

"I'll not put down the stones," the driver answered, "but I will listen while you talk. Come on out."

## 2



HE THOUGHT a moment, and then stepped out. His opponent had jumped off the wagon and was standing in the middle of the road, a heavy rock in each hand. The boy still sat upon the seat, his mouth open in stupid wonderment. In the face of the



massive threat that was the peasant, Sintor felt a perverse desire to bluff.

With a snarl, Sintor slouched back to his boulder and sat down. "I am not a priest," he said, "and if you had the smallest part of the sense that you were born with, you would know it. I am from the stars. My ship—the ship that brought me here—lies wrecked in the woods up there. I came to see this world, and I have no love for the priests." He sneered, and his face became inhuman.

The peasant stared at him a moment, his face becoming dark. His hand drew back and for a moment, Sintor stared at death. The agent did not move, but only let his own eyes burn. "From the stars, eh?" the peasant grated. "And you do not call yourself a priest! Are not the Star-men the arch priests of all? Is it not from them that the priests here gain their power? Did I not see with my own eyes the priests receive the manna from the Star-men three Releases back? And you are not a priest!"

"I am not a priest." Sintor's voice was savage, but then he let it smooth in sudden contrast. "I said I came from the stars. I did not say I was a 'starman'." He smiled in his twisted way, though inside he wondered what the words might mean.

The peasant brooded. A look of wonder crossed his face, and the arm that held the stone relaxed again. "You are ugly. And why should a Starman be ugly? They have all of space to loot. Maybe you aren't a Starman; maybe even the Star-men have their enemies. It could be so."

Sintor wondered what the possibility of looting space had to do with being ugly, but this did not seem the time to ask. He simply said: "It is so."

"And then what are you here for?" the peasant asked.

Sintor smiled his evil-looking smile. "It is in my mind that there are certain things the priests here do not

know." And he chuckled, and the sound was very evil.

The peasant stared at him, then suddenly roared out with laughter. "By the dust that flows, I think there are. And even though I pay the price, I'd like to see you teach the priests. It will be worth it." He dropped his stones and strode over to clap the agent on the shoulder.

Sintor winced at the blow but still felt happy; he had at least avoided being stoned to death. Also, he seemed to have gained an ally—an ally, however, before whom he had pretended knowledge. He had talked with glibness of star-men and of priests; the situation was still dangerous.

The peasant, he learned, was called "Brandis"—a farmer of vegetables and things. Not, emphatically, of Seeker's Lilly, locally known simply as "the Lilly".

"No, I've been lucky," Brandis said. "I haven't worked with the Lilly for five Releases. Three Releases back, as I said, I was a porter for the priests. I would have been a packer when the time came, but the Release came first; I was lucky."

"And now you're just an ordinary farmer, eh?" Sintor asked, wondering what a "Release" might be, but not daring to ask.

"Yeah," Brandis answered. "I got it soft this time. A good farm. Enough to eat. This ox and wagon. And the boy to help." He nodded at the boy up on the seat. "I been lucky. Maybe I'll pay for it next time, but I got no complaints right now."

Sintor thought a bit, and decided this was all incomprehensible. The only way seemed to be to keep the peasant talking with some safe questions. "He your son?" he asked.

THE FARMER whirled, and seemed to gather his strength. His eyes burned and his lip drew back. "Who are you?" he snarled. "Who

are you and what are you doing here?"

Sintor kept his face calm, though wondering what had happened. "I am what I said I am. And why are you so touchy?"

Brandis kept on frowning, but his muscles eased their bunching. "The question was too dumb," he said. "How would I know whose son he might be? How many Releases have there been since he was born? It was a stupid question."

His frown intensified with an obvious effort at thought. "But still, if you were a priest, you would know this; you would not ask the question. And you are ugly, though your mind is strong. If you were a priest, you would not be so ugly. Tell me—where you come from, how often do you have Releases?"

"We generally manage to know who belongs to whom," Sintor evaded.

Sintor studied the farmer. The peasant seemed to be calmed down, but he had no wish to stir any further outbursts. What, he wondered, was a "Release" that it had such a disruptive influence? That it left a man not able to know his own son? He was beginning to think that this was the key question to his whole problem. "How often do you have Releases?" he asked.

The peasant shrugged. "Sometimes often, sometimes not. You can't figure it—except that there will most likely be one soon. Things are getting edgy."

"Edgy?" Sintor asked.

"Yeah," the peasant answered. "There are too many of us beginning to think about killing the priests, and we're beginning to get together. It ain't going to last long—so if you're going to do anything, you better not wait."

Sintor thought a moment, trying to make some sense of the words, but there was little that added up. He decided to accept at face value Brandis' suggestion of the need for haste. "Okay," he said. "So I get to work.

Where can I find me some priests on which to work?"

"On the end of the road," Brandis said, nodding ahead. "The main temple's there. I'm taking this stuff in so I can get some liquor. You can ride if you want, but you'll have to ride in back and under the stuff."

"Why?" Sintor asked.

"You're dressed like a priest," Brandis said; "I don't want to get stoned."

Sintor nodded and, without further talk, jumped up onto the wagon and arranged himself to be concealed.

The sun was going down when the wagon stopped and Brandis called him out from his cover. Sintor found they were on the top of a ridge that looked over a valley. They had ridden all day.

"There she be," Brandis said. "The valley of the main temple. The Trade-ship comes to one which branches off. That's why they made this it. The temple's up at the head of the valley. That way." He pointed to his right, then he thought a moment. "I don't know. You can come with me if you want. But maybe you'd rather drop off here. Then you could work up along the side of the valley. That might be better for you. The priests down there are particular who gets in. Scared. Too many of us figure it's worth it to die if we can only kill one of them while we're at it."

He chuckled, but there was nothing of humor in it. "That's why I got stones here. Maybe I'll get a chance. Wasn't even hoping to find a priest on the road." He looked at Sintor.

"Yes, I'll get off here," Sintor said. "What kind of weapons do they have?"

"Don't you know?" Brandis frowned in sudden suspicion.

"I know the weapons the Starmen have," Sintor said. "But I don't know how many or which ones they've given to your priests."

"Oh," the farmer shrugged. "Their



best weapon, of course, is the Release. Any time we start getting organized against them, they pull one on us. But the weapon they carry is the nerve-whip."

"What's that?" Sintor asked. And then he noted the other's look of surprise. "I don't know the name."

"Oh," Brandis said. "Looks like a stick. They point it at you and you fall down and look like you're dead, or at least asleep. But inside you're screaming. It feels like fire and ice and something sharp all at the same time. Then they turn it off but it leaves you so tired and shaky you can't do anything for a couple of hours."

"Ah, the nerve-vibrator," Sintor said. To himself he made the note that it sounded like a weapon built for sigma-radiation. And this, he thought, was most peculiar: sigma-radiation was the product of a most advanced technology; even the Federation did not have it in effective or portable form as this must be. It was a surprise to find it on such a primitive world.

"How far will the ones they've got work?" he asked.

"About from here to that tree," Brandis said, indicating about fifty feet. "It'll make you uncomfortable for maybe three-four times as far, but it won't cripple you the same way."

"I see," Sintor nodded. "Okay, I'll move now. Thanks for the lift." He climbed stiffly down off the wagon.

"Uh, look," Brandis said. The agent turned to look at him. "I don't know what you figure to do. Take over, I suppose—and I don't suppose your taking over's going to make things any different. But that's okay—at least you'll give the priests some of their own stuff. Let them see what it's like to be in on a Release—to wake up some morning and find a Release has been made. Make them take their chances the same as they've made us take ours. You do that and there'll be a lot of us'll feel kindly for you, whatever you do afterwards." The hatred in his voice was ugly.

Sintor twisted his face into a leering grin. "I'll do that, pal," he said; "I'll do just that." He turned and slid into the forest that bordered the road. But he could not soon forget the tone of Brandis' voice, or stop wondering what the priests had done to earn such hatred.

**I**T WAS TOUGH going, through the forest. But Sintor, for all his seemingly ungainly body and jerky-looking movements, was skilled in finding the easiest way. He managed to make good time until it got too dark. When he could no longer see enough to make it worth while to go on, he stopped. Setting his mind to key himself alert at the first change in his surroundings, he slept.

The dawn-light awoke him and he moved on, ignoring the hunger within him, threading his way between the trees with a speed incredible in one who looked so clumsy. The sun was high when finally he crept to the edge

of the forest and looked down into the valley. He was, he saw, about opposite to where another valley angled off this one. Across the mouth of the other one there ran a string of sheds. From pictures he had seen, he recognized them.

That second valley was the one the Tradeship used. From the sheds, the crates of the pollen of Seekar's Lilly were delivered. The crates that—up until just recently—had held the only hope of life for millions who otherwise would die of cancer. Only, he thought, no more—no longer need the galaxy depend upon the lethal dust of pollen. The chain was broken, which was why he was here. The chain was broken that tied the Federation to this world. But only the Federation knew it. On all this world, Sintor was the only one who knew the truth.

Below him, he saw what was no doubt the temple-city. Built of polished stone, it sprawled upon the hillside. Beautiful in itself, but ugly in the blood and sweat that must have gone into its building. Only force—brutal and overwhelming force—could have built it on this primitive world. Only force or abiding love—and, to judge by Brandis, there was no love upon this world.

Between him and the temple the ground was grassy. Men dressed in robes such as the one he wore patrolled the space, each one armed with a short and ugly-looking rod. It was well-patrolled.

Sintor thought a bit. The intelligent way, he thought, would be to wait until night and then sneak in. He felt perversely irritated at the thought. He would be damnably hungry by night. And, anyway, he did not feel like waiting.

The decision made, he scouted along the edge of the forest. Finally he found a dead branch of a tree that suited him. He broke it off at the proper length and tucked it under his



arm. He then turned and backed slowly and carefully away from the forest.

"This is the way they would do it," he thought. "I am a priest and the son of a priest. I have seen something suspicious on the edge of the forest. I have investigated and satisfied myself that it was nothing. But still I take no chances. I do not turn my back. And I keep this 'nerve-whip' that feels like a branch ready for use. I back down slowly and carefully until I am beyond the range of a well-thrown stone. About here. And here I straighten up; I look around. I wave to those priests down there who are watching me. I wave them to say that it was nothing. And I do *not* breathe a sigh of relief to see them turn away. Instead, I turn and amble on my route around the temple. For I am a priest and my duty is to guard the temple." Turn he did, and so also did he amble on around.

The priests—the real priests—paid no attention to him. They waved or nodded as he passed, but it was obvious they had no suspicion of him. His step was unhurried, his manner almost careless, as he drifted along the slope. The only fact to distinguish him from all the others was that, as he drifted on around the temple, he also slid in towards it. And, in fact, by the time he had reached the other side of the valley, he was practically in the shadow of its walls. It was there that he stopped and, with complete casualness, looked around. Since no one appeared to be watching him, he turned and strolled idly towards a gate in the wall.

**T**HERE WERE two priests lounging by the gate, but Sintor walked



with assurance, and they only nodded to him. He lifted his hand in calm return and kept going. Only his eyes moved alertly to take in what they saw, and his brain to evaluate it.

Before him lay a broad avenue over which massive trees arched. Far down at the end he could see the broad steps of some huge building gleaming white-ly. Clearly, he thought, there lay the center of the priesthood and a dangerous place for him until he knew some more. To the right of the walk, behind the bordering trees, there were rows of buildings, squat and rather ugly. Dormitories, perhaps, for the lesser priests. A possible place to hide, he considered, but a poor place to learn or to strike. To the left was a park, scattered with small buildings. Like the main hall, they looked to be made of marble and with care and luxury. There, he decided, lay his opportunity—danger too, of course, but also opportunity. His shadow was not through the gate, therefore, when his feet bent left with easy carelessness.

Once off the main avenue, and cut off from the view of the priests at the gate, Sintor's steps became more purposeful. Finding the opportunity, he dropped the stick that he had carried to simulate what Brandis had called the "nerve-whip", and strode on with lengthening step. After all, he thought, he was in a place that was probably reserved for the aristocracy of the priesthood; and the clothes he wore were crude and coarse, not at all befitting to a prince. Therefore, he considered, it might be well if he appeared to know where he was going.

As he passed others in the park, he dipped his head in quick obeisance, making the gesture give an air of servility. They were, he noted, almost uniformly young and handsome. Both boys and girls were there in, apparently, approximate equality. These, he thought, were the chosen ones, the darlings of this world—the ones for

whom this world was but a plaything. He thought this until he read their eyes and saw fear, and hatred, and despair. A despair they may have failed to recognize themselves—that perhaps they felt as simple boredom. But a despair, nevertheless, that made these the accursed, instead of chosen ones.

Walking as he was, as if he had a goal, Sintor was bound to find one. He came to a corner of the park that seemed set apart, somehow. There was a special aura about it that was hard to identify. The trees and gardens were a bit more carefully tended; there were fewer priests, and those there were, seemed slightly furtive.

Ahead of him was a wall, just barely higher than his head. The path he was on led towards this wall, and through and opening in it. Sintor's instinct was to avoid this; here, quite possibly, was the center of power in the temple—and perhaps in the entire world of Pelton. For this he was not ready. But there was no path onto which he could turn; the one he was on led only through the wall, and he hesitated to reverse his steps. He saw that he was being watched, apparently with some suspicion. It occurred to him that he would probably be questioned if he turned back. And so, with a mental shrug, and a face that was impassive in its ugliness, he kept on past the wall.

The path immediately forked, but Sintor did not hesitate. He knew he had no reason at all to choose one way rather than the other—so he turned right and followed it on a curving path that led through a group of trees. There was no one in sight, nor was there anything to be heard; but he did not drop his pretense of knowing his route. Not until he walked around a tree and suddenly found himself before a pool.

He stopped when he saw the pool, and froze, hoping he had not been

seen. For a girl lay in the pool, floating with lazy sensuality among some water-flowers, rich golden hair streaming through the water. He looked around, studying the neighborhood with care, looking for her attendants; there did not seem to be any. On the far side of the pool was a little house that nestled among the trees with exquisite perfection. Perhaps the girl had come from there, he thought; perhaps she had no need for attendants; or perhaps the attendants stayed within the house. This, he thought, was more than possible for the pervading mood in this secluded grove was one of self-assurance. The girl, he felt, was not afraid.

He studied her, trying with all his strength to stay objective. Young she was, and very beautiful. Long and lithe, with a sleek perfection. Lazily, she turned and, with a sudden drive sent herself coasting towards the further bank. Touching it, she drew herself up with a smooth deliberateness. She lifted herself to sit on the edge leaving her feet in the water, then twisted back to reach for the towel that lay behind her.

### 3



TOO LATE did Sintor try to jump; too late did he see that she had grasped, not the towel, but a nerve-whip that lay beneath it; too late did he see that whip pointed towards himself. As he realized it and tried to

gather himself to leap, he felt his every muscle scream in agony, and saw red blackness.

He came to with his mind still shrinking from the horror of that torture. The nerves of his body still trembled and his muscles felt utterly

weary. He was lying on the ground, he felt—apparently where he had fallen since his body was crumpled in on itself. Cautiously, he opened his eyes to slits, trying to control the trembling of the lids.

Before him were two small feet. Long sleek legs still dripped water onto them. A golden tan, they bore simple golden anklet on the one. The wish came up within him to see the rest of her, but he forced himself to lie still and let himself recover from the nerve-whip.

The girl, apparently, thought he had lain there long enough. One foot came out to prod him and her voice said: "Get up; get up unless you want some more." It was a lazy voice, but a cold and indifferent one. Its tone said that, to its owner, Sintor was of little interest and of no importance. Not contemptuous but simply unaware of him as more than a slave—an aristocrat without knowledge of the peasant's virtues.

Sintor obeyed the command. Painfully he rolled over and gathered his knees and elbows under him. With a groan that he could not stop, he pushed himself up and squatted before her. For a moment he stayed there, gathering strength and waiting for his muscles to let go their quivering. And finally he managed to stand swaying before her.

The girl, he found, had backed off a step or two. She stood there, clad carelessly in her towel, looking with an expression of astonishment at him. "By the dust that flows," she said, "who are you?"

"I am but one of your lesser priests," he answered, "who has blundered into where he should not be."

"Are you?" She smiled with dawning delight. "But you are so beautifully ugly. My priests are not. Not even the least of them are less than handsome. But you—!" She laughed a rippling sound of appreciation.

Sintor shrugged. "Yes, my lady, that

is so. But, nevertheless, at the last Release..." He peered at her to see how this explanation might affect her. Apparently it was acceptable because her eyes twinkled with malicious humor while she nodded "It could be so," she said. She smiled cruelly.

She stood there with easy and assured grace, grey eyes studying him. Sintor, in his turn studied her, although with greater subtlety. He saw a girl who was, undoubtably, one of the most beautiful he had ever seen. Her slim body fitted the impression he had gained when he first saw her in the pool. Her face, under the golden hair, had a perfection of feature that was classic in its symmetry. But it was a cruel face—without trace or hint of mercy. There was no pity there, nor anything at all except satisfaction and assurance. Aware of her own power, certain of her right, Sintor knew that she was without humility.

She apparently made up her mind regarding him, for she pointed to the little house that nestled in the trees and told him to go there. With stumbling feet still unrecovered from the nerve-whip, he obeyed. Entering, she ordered him to sit, pointing to a couch. Then, going to a cupboard, she got out food and placed it on a table in front of him. "Eat, my ugly one," she said. "Eat, for, as the whip has made a quivering wretch of you, so will food make of you as much of a man as you may be. Eat, my hoptoad, for you fascinate me." And she smiled. Her eyes were lazy but were also watchful.

At the sight of food, Sintor was aware of desperate hunger. Even if the whip did not make for hunger—and her words had said it did—yet it had been long since he had eaten. Even his self-discipline was stretched as he paused momentarily to think. But a quick review of the factors showed him no reason why he should hesitate and he began to wolf it down.

When he had finished, he lay back with a sudden weariness he could not

fight. "Sleep, oh monster," he heard her say. "Sleep, and you will wake a man." He heard no more.

**H**OW LONG he slept, he did not know; but when he awoke, it was night. Through half-veiled eyes, Sintor saw the room lit only with a fire. He lay there, unstirring, while he recalled the events that had brought him there. Carefully he went over them, reliving in his mind each separate moment—to recollect the shade of meaning, the tone and word unsaid. And it was only when he was sure he had each separate fact and unrelated detail well in hand that he allowed himself to stir. It was only then that he yawned and stretched and finally heaved himself up sitting.

He peered around, blinking in simulated sleepiness. When he saw her, there was a startled moment as his instincts closed his face. Then, knowing the effect was intentional, he relaxed his control. The girl was in a chair in a corner of the room. She was curled up like a cat inside a deep black robe. The firelight danced at her throat accenting the compelling contrast. Her blonde hair curled down in a river of fire across her silhouette. Priestess of the night. Relaxed but all aware.

When she saw he was awake and had become aware of her, she moved. With slow deliberateness, she stretched up to her feet, and moved towards him. The black robe flowed about her, and only her feet showed out beneath, threading a delicate pattern over the floor. When she reached him she paused, staring at him with opaque eyes, and then she sat down, close but nowhere touching him.

She smiled obliquely and said, "I told you you would wake a man, my misshapen one." Her voice was softly chanting. "I told you, did I not? And was I not correct? Are you not a man, just as I am a woman?" Her hand moved and barely touched his arm.

Sintor moved towards her, his blood pounded darkly in his head, and his fingers tingling. But as he moved, the perversity that was a part of him cried out. It cried out against the domination that the girl desired; it cried out for him to think and to decide in cold rationality if that was what he wanted.

He stopped, for the blink of an eye, and thought. He glazed his eyes and let his mind sink in—falling away into an abstraction that was without emotion. And he considered.

This world was psychopathic; its structure was imposed without regard for the fear and hatred it engendered. It was given what stability it had only by the "Release"—whatever that might be. Let the people only get together for a minute; give them a moment's chance to fuse their hatred into single action; and the priests would die a bloody death.

This girl, he also knew, acted as if she were the highest priestess of this cult of fear; she had the arrogance and the assurance of one used to such a post. If so, then as the Priestess of Despair she was the symbol and the target of the hatred of the world. What kind of person was she, he asked himself, to stand untouched by so much hate? She could not be normal—possibly a paranoiac, given what stability she might have by the fact of her success.

If this were so, then only in success could she be stable. As the target of a world's hatred, she had to prove herself above that world or be crushed beneath its guilt. The gratification of her whim was more than luxury; it was a necessity of her survival. Only so long as she could get what she might want could she survive.

In the present case, she had cast her whim on Sintor. Bored, no doubt, with handsome men, tired of her normal toys, his surpassing ugliness, was novelty; she desired him.

It had not occurred to her that he

might not take what she offered. Obviously it had not, or she would not have offered so openly. With the open offer given, she was vulnerable, committed to her whim; if she did not get it, it would be a savage blow to her assurance. If he wanted, Sintor could let loose the full unlogic of her mind.

Did he want to, he wondered. He had two choices. He could give her what she sought, and this would not only be pleasant, but it might lead to the key he wanted—if it led her to carelessness. But it might not; surrounded by hatred and abiding fear, the pattern of carefulness might be too deep. He would be her toy, but she might not give her toy the chance to scratch her.

The other choice was dangerous. To thwart her, to frustrate her when she least expected it, was to let loose a beast. It was dangerous, but, in his perversity, this was the choice that appealed to Sintor.

THE DECISION made in the blink of an eye, he hesitated but a moment further. He paused to implement the choice, and to give it strength and body. He reached back into the awareness of his own ugliness, the awareness that was almost his first conscious memory. And he drew from that awareness, building a solid hatred of the beautiful one before him. Like a valve he shunted that hatred in, and the hollow shell of his decision became a solid driving force; he let his eyes unglaze and looked at the girl before him.

"Why yes, I am a man." He spoke reasonably. "And I am quite certain you are a woman." There was only the barest glint of irony in his tone, and his eyes were cool and without humor.

The girl stared at him, her eyes wide. She looked like a picture of surprised innocence. She was puzzled, and





could not account for his words. She smiled tentatively, and reached out her hand again, to stroke his arm. Her fingers trembled slightly.

Sintor blinked, and with perfect realism, half stifled a yawn. "By the way," he said, "do you happen to have any more food around. I seem to be still hungry." He sounded a trifle apologetic.

The girl drew back her hand as if he'd burned her. There was a hint of panic in her eyes. "Food? You want food?" He nodded blandly. "But I am the Kritna, and you are here with me. I have offered you that for which many men would gladly die; how can you want food?" There was a desperate note in her voice.

"I'm sorry," Sintor answered. "It is, I know, impolite of me—but the simple fact is that I am hungry. You see I am a very ugly man, and you might think that I am therefore lonely. But strangely enough, women seem to like ugliness."

He acted coy, and looked at her with an arch humor. "I don't know why, but it is a fact—and I do all

right. I like you, and you are a very pretty girl; but I am afraid I am too hungry right now to bother with you." There was laughter in his tone, and he gave no sign at all that he saw the rising flush of anger in her face.

She whirled up out of the sofa. With one bound she crossed the room and seized a nerve-whip from off a shelf. Her face was twisted and savage as she turned to him. "It's food you want is it?" The words were hoarse and rough. "You won't bother with me till you've had some food, will you? I'll give you food, you..." She fired a string of words at him, calling him all manner of strange things. Each word has its own curse-words, so these were unfamiliar to him. But of their purpose her drawn lips and glaring eyes left no doubt at all. And as her voice mounted to a screaming climax, she pressed the stud and once more he was lost in the bright red agony of the nerve-whip.

As the waves of torture rolled over him, tearing savagely at the very structure of his mind, he was dimly aware that other men came in. He heard the girl, cursing. He felt himself lifted up and carted off ungently. And in the end, he felt the damp floor of a dungeon and heard the crash of a metal door. And then he was alone and left to sink into unconsciousness or sleep. Alone to dream of the tiger he had let loose, with full malice aforethought; to dream of being clawed by that tiger, and of striving to find some way to use its very savagery against it. But in the dream he could not find the way.

**S**INTOR slept; and after a while, he awoke. He was lying on a damp stone floor in a room just barely big enough to lie in. The only light came dimly through the bars on the door from a torch outside. The only thing in the room except himself was an earthenware bowl on the floor near the door.

With twisted, twitching arms, he dragged himself to the bowl. In it he found a rotten slimy mess. Food, perhaps—but food that only a vulture would eat. But inside him was the frantic hunger that the nerve-whip seemed to breed; his body cried out for the food and its cry was stronger than the revulsion of his mind. He ate.

Having eaten, he slept. When, again, he woke, he found himself still stretched upon the floor. The bowl had been refilled with the same vile mess. But still, with trembling hands, he ate. And having eaten, fell asleep again.

Three times this happened. Slowly he was forced to realize that the pattern was not changing. The utter weakness, the twitching that made each motion agony, was not abating. The hunger that before had marked recovery was this time only a single phase of torture. The sleep brought no release and no improvement; the pattern of hell was fixed and he was caught.

Three times this pattern of his life repeated. And then the fourth time, his guard awakened him. "Wake up, you fool, for the Kritna would speak with you," he heard. "Wake up, or I will have to wake you up with this." He felt the nudge of a club.

He twisted over and tried, without success, to hoist himself on agonizing joints. He could not do it, and the pain sent him back to the floor, drenching him with sweat. He lay there, struggling to remember. "The Kritna?" And then the memory came flooding back. The girl! That was what she had called herself.

"Yeah, the Kritna," the guard said. "What did you do to her, by the way?" His voice was curious.

"I made her mad," Sinter said.

The guard laughed. "You sure did," he said. "Don't remember ever seeing anybody as badly off as you are." There was no pity in his voice—only interest.

"What did she do to me?" Sinter asked. "The nerve-whip, I know, but I'm not coming out of it. How come?"

"She gave you too much of it," the guard answered. "You turn the nerve-whip on a guy and he gets knocked out. If you turn it off fast, he'll recover. If you don't... well, he's liable not to be quite as good as he was. And if you keep pouring it into him the way she must have into you, why then they get left like you. And, brother, you've had it!"

"Then I'll never be any better?" Sinter asked, feeling a black despair sweep over him.

"No." The guard was contemptuous. "No, you've had it for all time. Except, of course, you get a chance in a Release. But I don't think you will. I think that's why she wants you now; she don't seem to like you." He chuckled with mild good humor.

"A Release?" Sinter could not, for a moment, remember. And then he did. That was the unknown factor here. The "Release" was, he knew, the key to this whole world. It was what made for such stability as there was. It was through the "Release", apparently, that the priests were able to make the people gather the pollen of Seekar's Lilly, in the face of the certain death from addiction to the drug that it contained. And it was the "Release" that made this world a bitter hatred—a world in which there was no love that he had found. No love nor any pity, but only lust and fear and hatred. It was the "Release" that was the key, but he did not know what it might be.

The guard stood looking at him for a moment. Then, apparently conceding that Sinter could not walk—even if clubbed—he called another guard. Together, each taking an arm, they picked him up and carried him out the door, down a corridor, and up a flight of stairs. They carried him across a crowded hall and dumped him on the edge of a raised portion of the floor.

4



HE SILKY voice, though not loud, cut through the drone of the crowd with hidden intensity. "So my little monster is not feeling well. Is he hungry? Does he want food? Or has he had enough?"

Sintor looked up.

In a thronelike chair in the center of the raised portion sat the girl. Her lips were curled in a semblance of a smile but her eyes glittered as she watched him and the light in them was quite insane.

He looked around, not bothering to answer her. The hall, what he could see of it through holes in the crowd of priests was large. He figured it was probably the huge white temple he had seen in the center of the city. It was closed, without windows or other openings, and the walls were quite bare. The only decorative features at all were the torches spaced at even intervals around, and the doors along the far wall that kept opening to admit more people from the night outside.

The throne, if throne it was, was near the back of the hall. On that wall there were several small doors. It was through one of those, he thought, that he had been brought. The others probably led to other subterranean quarters and apartments.

He stared at the torch that was nearest him. There was something odd about it, he thought. He could not quite decide at first, what it might be. And then he realized that there was a peculiar sheen to the wall behind it. The walls seemed to be of marble, but there was a quality to their reflection that was different. He stared at it, striving to make his eyes focus sharply. It looked, he thought with sudden recognition, as if there were a

fine, metallic screen over all the surface. It was with a start that the thought came to him that this appeared to be a shielded room. He wondered why.

"Do you approve, my little pet?"

The girl's voice sneered.

"Do I have the choice of disapproval?" he asked.

"Oh yes," she said. "I don't mind in the least if you dislike this. And, as a matter of fact, you will see this many times before you die. You will see it each time we call a Release. Each time we will bring you up here from your pleasant little room below. For I am merciful and I would spare you the agony of Release." She laughed. low and viciously.

"There is no Release here?" he asked.

"In here?" She seemed puzzled. "Of course not. This is the Temple-room. Are your wits befuddled? You may not have seen this one before, but don't you remember the other temple-rooms you must have seen?" She waited for an answer, but Sintor decided to keep quiet and let his silence force her speech.

She did not wait for long. "No, my little monster, there is no Release in here; this is where we come to avoid Release. Only when we're old, or sick, or want to change for any reason do we not come to a Temple-room. Do you think I would take a chance on losing this?" She looked down at her body. "While it stays young, I would rather that there were no Releases than to risk its loss. Only when it's old or useless will I go out and pick some other young and handsome one, and pit my will against the peasant's feeble panic." Her face was cruel and unpitying.

"There is no Release in here," she went on, a moment later, "even though we make it here. You will lie there and will watch me build the forces of Release. You will see the Sphere light up, and you will know that if you

were outside, then you would find Release. But, because you are not a man—but only the shell of a man, sucked dry by my contempt—then you will know that there is no Release for you but death!" She glared at him from snakelike eyes.

She turned her head suddenly to four men who stood waiting at her side. "Bring it here," she said. "It is time." The men bowed and disappeared behind the throne. A moment later they appeared again, each bearing the corner of a table. They set the table down beside the throne. On it was an apparatus whose nature Sintor could not fathom. It was alien in form and design—so alien that he doubted if it had been made by human hands. It could have been, he thought, a relic of some ancient life form. Such relics did exist throughout the universe, and occasionally they showed a high technocracy. This could be one of those. For it was alien, and only the empty sphere that formed the apex of the equipment seemed natural in its geometric perfection.

The men took from the table a coil of heavy cable. This they laid along the floor and plugged the end into a socket in the wall. The cable passed very close to where Sintor lay. He could have touched it easily but simply lay there studying it. It, too, was somewhat alien. The outer layer appeared to be a woven copper mesh, but over it there was a faint suggested iridescence that puzzled him. And the cable was not uniform; its diameter varied with its length in some obscure pattern. What kind of energy was it supposed to carry? He wondered. Considering it, and the machine that was to generate the energy, and the suggested strangeness of the effects the energy would have, he doubted if it was of any form his civilization knew.

**WHEN** ALL was set, and the men had told the girl so, she stood up. The hall became silent before her.

"It is time," she cried. "Are the doors all sealed and the room prepared?" One after another, men who seemed to be stationed at the doors called out that all was ready. Then she went on: "If it is so, then I, the Kritna, do summon the strength of the globe. I summon it to build the pattern that defends you. I do that which only I can do and for which you worship me. For the Globe is mine and only to my mind does it react, and I am unique. I am the Kritna!" The assembled crowd bowed low before her, and she stood there a moment, secure in her arrogance.

She turned to the table at her side. Her eyes became opaque, her face impassive and quiet as she stared at the sphere. In response there came a faint shimmering in it. A shimmering of light, shifting in color and intensity, weaving an obscure pattern.

It was no fake, he knew. In some queer telepathic way, he sensed that she was actually activating the equipment. Sintor wondered if he could interfere with what she did. He thought not; it did not feel as if he could. And even if he could, what good would it do? It would not destroy her or the hierarchy that she headed. It would just make her kill him. And he was sure she would not hesitate a moment to do so if she felt him any sort of threat. He did not try to take control.

Slowly the pattern in the globe built up, weaving with greater and greater speed and brilliance, building a complexity that was almost solid. Serpents of fire that intertwined in fantastic pattern. There was a hypnotic quality to it at first, as it kept folding itself inside out. But as it shifted with increasing speed, and as the color grew intense it became almost painful to watch. The instinct was to crouch with averted eyes, as if awaiting an explosion.

There was a part of Sintor's brain that was remote and cool. With careful abstraction, it was studying the problem, testing the validity of its



data, checking each logical step, assuring itself that it was not neglecting any logical possibility. It waited, prepared, for the climactic instant.

And there was another part of him, some deeper more unknown level, that studied the girl. It was this part that was aware of her mind, and of what it was doing with the sphere. Telepathy, perhaps; awareness on a subtle plane—he did not know. He only knew that it watched, waiting to give the signal that the instant had arrived.

And the instant came. The awareness came that the girl was ready to release the energy of the sphere—to let the wierd energy stored there flow down through the cable in a rushing torrent, flow out through whatever means of radiation was provided, pour loose upon this world to create the "Release", whatever that might be.

**S**INTOR acted; with a convulsive movement, he grabbed the cable where it passed near him. The agony of the effort seared through his nerves, but, by sheer force of will, he wrenched the cable and tipped over the table. The table tottered and fell, the strange and alien machinery falling with it. As it landed, the sphere exploded with blinding light. The sphere that contained and restrained the unknown energy was shattered—even as he had hoped.

He felt a sensation beyond all normal experience—a twisting and a wrenching of his very soul, as if he were plucked out of his body and crushed and pulled by some enormous mystic hand.

It was black. There was a solid blackness that denied the very thought of light. There was a numbness that refused the thought of feeling, and a silence that beat in upon him. He was alone.

The deep resources of his mind took hold, enforcing sanity. They clamped down, keeping his mind from destroying itself in panic, and demanded an analysis. They forced his rational

mind to effective action. They made him realize that there was only a limited number of possibilities. And most of those—such as the possibility that he could think of that offered anything but complete failure. He assumed its truth.

On that assumption, then, he acted. He thought of the girl. He visualized her, and cried out to himself the command to go there. And, in the formless void, he felt himself move. He summoned his power and drove whatever it was that was himself towards the identification of the girl.

There was a sudden moment of contact, a moment of violence and of struggle, a moment in which he threw the full and uninhibited force of his peculiar will against the other. But then he felt the other flee in panic and despair, and he was alone again.

Once more he felt the floor beneath him, solid, and hard. He lay full length upon it. For a moment, he thought only of failure. But then he realized that one leg was pinned against a solid object. As he had lain before, there had been nothing that could pin it.

Wild hope surged up within him. One eye he opened cautiously. He could not see, for a curtain hung in front of it—a curtain of long, silky hair that looked blonde. He put his hand up to shove it out of the way, and the hand was smooth and delicate, with tapering fingernails. For final proof, he shifted so that he could see the body that was his. There was no doubt. The body was quite obviously the one that had belonged to the girl known as the Kritna!

He lay there, letting the knowledge sweep through him. His assumption—the wild, crazy assumption which was the only one he could think of that fitted the facts—was right. The energies the sphere had stored were, in some amazing way, able to release the minds and personalities of all the people exposed to it. And while that energy, that unknown radiation, flooded

the ether, all minds were free, floating in a formless void. Only when the radiation died could the minds return to the bodies. But when they did, the pairing of mind and body tended to be random, like the ball dropping into the slot of a roulette wheel. This was a "Release"—when all minds were gathered up, shuffled, and redealt according to the laws of chance.

But even as a roulette-wheel can be crooked, and control be had of the slot into which the ball shall fall, so had the Kritna and the priests made this game crooked. Firstly, it was crooked because they gave themselves the choice of whether or not to play. If the body that they had was young and healthy, and gave them pleasure, they did not play. Instead they stayed protected against the strange radiation. Only if they were sick, or old—or if, for some other reason, the body that they had no longer gave them pleasure—only then did they take their chance in the game.

But it was also crooked in an even more brutal way. For there were those—himself as an example—who had some strange power of the mind that let them control their fate in the Release. They could go out and, as the girl had said, "pick some other young and handsome one..." Thieves they were, without pity or humanity; it was no wonder they were hated.

It was no wonder also that their rule was hard to break. For in the moment of a gathering revolution, when the people in their hatred were preparing to strike, they had put to release the energy of the sphere; in the consequent reshuffle, the revolutionists would lose each other. The organization of revolt would be broken, and the group dispersed. It would be scattered, furthermore, without leaving any mechanism of identification.

SINTOR thought for a moment, drifting down into his mind. And he found in there some vestigial memories of the body itself. He could,

though faintly and in unorganized manner, remember some of the things the girl had done, or had experienced. And in this fact, he saw the final link of the chain of the people of this world. For if they organized a revolution, and thought to foil Release by arranging some signal for their mutual identification—then, if, in the reshuffle, a priest got hold of one of the bodies, then he would remember the signal. The revolution would be doomed. No, the Release was a perfect device for the protection of revolt.

He shuddered as he thought of it, and of its implications. How could there be anything but hatred and despair in all this world? Brandis, the peasant, had not known whether the boy with him was his son. How could he, through all the Releases, there had been since he was born? And how could he love the boy or any other person, not knowing who they were or where they might be shortly? How could there be love or pity, or any of the higher feelings, on this world with its history and its prospect of Release. Here, without even the elemental stability of identity, there could be only loneliness and aloneness.

This, he thought, was the reason why they could harvest the deadly crop of the pollen of Seekar's Lilly. What did it matter if your body rotted from the drug the dust contained? Why should you worry as it pulled you toward ultimate dissolution? Before the end, you could be sure that there would be Release and you would have a chance. Somebody lost, of course; the body died eventually, and with it died a personality. But that would not be you, providing a Release occurred in time. So you really did not mind the work; you did not mind the rot it started in your body. And you gathered in the pollen as required.

With a shudder Sintor rose to his—her—feet. The crowd that had been

standing in the hall still squirmed upon the floor. Some few were getting up with dazed expressions, but most were staring around, shocked by the unexpected Release.

The machine, the wierd and alien mechanism of Release, lay on the floor, half melted, destroyed—without chance of any reconstruction. And, reaching back into the memories left by the Kritna, Sintor knew that the machine was unique. It was, as he had guessed, a relic of an ancient culture that they had found. No man had made it; no man could even start, as yet, to study the forces that it had controlled. Destroyed, it was unique and could not be rebuilt. Never again would this world or any other know the horror of Release.

Sintor could picture the future. Revenge, there would be, bloody and cruel. There would be nothing to stop the peasants from revolt. They would learn to get together, without the Release to shatter their organization. And when they were together, even the nerve-whips would be futile. The priests would die. Those that did not would be hunted with savage intentness. The rule of the priests would be destroyed, and the world would fall to anarchy. They would starve, and they would kill each other for a crust of bread or for whatever else they might desire. Each for himself, facing for the first time a future for which it would be meaningful to gather food and other things, they would act in absolute brutality.

But they would learn. They would learn to love. First their women and their children. Then their tribe, and then their race. And finally they would learn to love humanity. Through the blood purge that was surely coming, they would learn, and grow to full humanity.

**S**INTOR smiled and turned away.

As he did so, pushing back the long blonde hair, he saw the body that had once been his. It lay where he

had left it. In the eyes that glared out at him there was no sanity; he knew that the mind behind those eyes had not survived the shock. Vengeance was his, he thought, but he found no joy in it. The turnabout that he suspected was, he thought appropriate. There was justice in it; but there was no mercy. And pity was in his heart, but there was nothing he could do.

He looked around. Seeing a nerve-whip, he picked it up. From his acquired memories, he knew that this too, was a relic of the ancient culture. He doubted if the technologies of man could duplicate it, but he thought that he might let them try. Besides, these priest might try to stop him—even in the face of their habit of obedience to this body. So, carrying it slung over an arm, he threaded his way through the mob towards the doors to the Temple.

Outside, he gazed around, breathing the cool night air. Orienting himself, he started to make his way towards the valley where the Trade-ship would land. From the memories that were not his own, he knew the ship would be in soon.

As Sintor walked, he smiled to himself. He was free, and he had done what he had come to do; he had found out how this world had worked. He had learned the device the priests had used to make the people harvest the crop of the pollen of Seekar's Lilly. And he had destroyed that device, so that—now that humanity no longer needed that awful crop—the people of this world would not continue slaves. And now he was on his way back.

He wondered how much trouble he would have convincing Iklan who he was. He thought of his identification: "The impossibility of providing pseudo time-invariant channels of communication between barbarians causes the development of non-topological cultures on Pelton."

Sintor chuckled at the strange irony that had picked that sentence as the

identification code; a code should be meaningless, however meaningful it sounded. But Pelton had given meaning to it. On Pelton there were no "pseudo time-invariant channels of communication." Not between the peasants, anyway. And there *was* a culture in spite of it. There was stability, though there was no topology that lasted more than till the next Release. The culture was a hell, but it existed; and the code made sense.

But getting back to his original problem, he doubted if Ikkan would

be easily convinced, even with the identification-code; and even with his assignment. When you drop off an agent who is a very ugly man, you do not lightly accept him back as an extremely beautiful girl. No, Ikkan would be hard to convince, Sintor thought.

He found perverse amusement in the thought, and smiled. His hand went up to smooth the golden hair. The gesture was quite feminine, but Sintor was adaptable.

★

## Readin' and Writthin'

Gnome Press has been issuing quite a passel of most enjoyable books in the past year, novels and collections which add up to solid entertainment, but which, for the most part, do not require extended analysis.

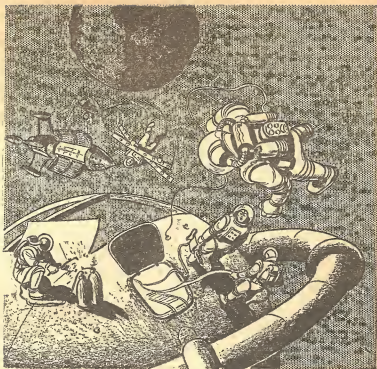
First of all, we have two volumes dealing with the well-loved (and roundly despised) character, Conan the Barbarian, who, as nearly everyone interested knows, was the creation of the late Robert E. Howard. The books are, "The Sword of Conan" and "King Conan".

The first contains two short novels, "The People of the Black Circle" (from *Weird Tales*, Sept., Oct., Nov. 1934); and "Red Nails" (from *Weird Tales*, July, Aug-Sept., Oct. 1936); and two short stories: "The Slithering Shadow" (from *Weird Tales*, Sept. 1933) and "The Pool of the Black One" (from *Weird Tales*, Oct. 1933).

All four are replete with action, atmosphere, and weird settings—and equally devoid of characters, believable background, and true weirdness. After all, in this setting, anything can happen, and usually does; Conan may suffer the tortures of a tv wrestler, but we all know he'll overcome his anguish and the villains (natural and supernatural) will come to none-too-untimely ends.

And yet, as Sprague de Camp, and many others, have pointed out, despite the manifest flaws and banalities, the Conan stories have a sweep of sheer romance about them that triumphs over all the excesses of needless gore, *dei ex machina*, coincidences, unbelievability, and cardboard cut-out characters. If you like one, you'll love them all, and look upon the critic who explains so carefully why you should not like such drivel, more in pity than in anger. This volume sells for \$2.75.

(continued to page 64)



# SNAIL'S PACE

by Algis Budrys

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

Time was running short, as men sought the stars in stumbling steps, with shackled feet...

**T**HE NEWSPAPER whipped against Post's leg as he jumped out of his car. He reached down for it and read the headline with nervous swings of his eyes.

## UNOSAF DELIVERS ULTIMATUM

Union of South Africa declares for territorial self-determination following UNDELSA declaration to UN at yesterday's session.

Another one, he thought, and felt the cold pack of tension grow heavier at the pit of his stomach. He searched

out other headlines on the rest of the crumpled front page.

NEW DELHI, India, Sunday, May 3 (AP):

Informed sources here state that India will probably announce its readiness to serve as arbiter in the Indonesian Police Action dispute, and that this announcement will come by tomorrow at the latest. There are indications that internment camps for captured personnel of both sides are already being prepared.

BERNE, Switzerland:

The Swiss Government today announced its stand of firm neutrality



in the event of any outbreak of open hostilities on the European continent. This almost traditional declaration comes after...

He crumpled the newspaper in his hand and threw it under the car. *"In the event!"* he thought angrily and ironically. *The lid's coming off the kettle again, and for every one that's trying to hold it down, six are laying in supplies of burn-dressings—and nobody's trying to put the fire out.*

He slammed the car door shut, locked it with staccato twists of his arm, and half-ran across the parking area, his musette bag swinging at arm's length beside him.

The briefing room was crowded full of men who sawed at the air with cigaret-filled fingers and shouted at the men around them.

The WAF Sergeant just inside the door almost shouted "Attention!" when he came in, then noticed that his regulation trenchcoat had no insignia skewered into the shoulder flaps and merely pointed him into the melee. He showed her his pass, but she only flickered her eyes over it before gesturing again, this time impatiently. He pushed between two men who were arguing violently in the aisle, did not apologize as his bag caught one of them on the thigh, and kept moving, shouldering toward the front of the room.

**N**OBODY was standing on the platform under the map board, and there was no sign that there was anyone in authority anywhere in the room. Post swung around at the foot of the aisle, dropped his bag, and shouted, "Quiet!"

The word, completely at variance with any of the usual military attention-getters, threw the room into silence. Eyes began turning toward him.

"This is Hervey Post. I want all

the men in the spaceship crew to report to me here at once," he went on, his voice somewhat quieter, but no less impatient. There were bursts of indignation at the fringes of the crowd, but a small group began to work its way toward him, the various men coming from all parts of the room. He watched them come, not speaking until it became obvious that no one else was separating out of the remainder of the crowd.

"Is this all of you?" he asked crisply.

The seven faces swung back and forth for a moment, and then a thin-faced, dark-browed man with seamed cheeks stepped forward. "Yes, sir. I'm Devereaux, Co-Pilot. Wesley isn't here."

Post raked the man's face with his eyes. "Wesley isn't coming. Bad security risk. I'm your new pilot."

He let that penetrate, disregarding the mixed surprise reactions, then went on. "Judging from the way this pack is acting, none of you are keeping your mouths shut. Wesley just happened to be more obvious than the rest of you."

A slim, shallow-faced crewman with long blond hair brushed past the arm Devereaux put up in an attempt to restrain him. "I guess they can read the papers as well as we can!" he said into Post's face. "The flight's off, anyway; there's a war coming any hour. Who're you, anyway?"

Post bored into him with his eyes. "What's your name and duty?" he asked softly.

"Ericson. Navigator. Lieutenant (SG) USN. And I asked *you* a question, mister."

"The only questions you'll ask me, Lieutenant, will have a direct bearing on course data, and nothing else. We'll have time for amenities when we get back on the ground."

Devereaux pulled the red-faced navigator back, and took his place in front of Post. "Then the flight's still

on," he said, the touch of eagerness in his voice sounding oddly boyish in contrast to the experienced face.

"You're Major Devereaux, aren't you?" Post asked, not bothering with the self-evident answer.

"That's right. And you're Hervey Post."

"I said so," Post said shortly.

"The Hervey Post, I meant," Devereaux protested.

Post felt the familiar tremor at the corner of his thin lips. "The one whose records you're famous for breaking, yes," he said.

Devereaux moved his arms impatiently. "You were called out of retirement, sir?"

*Out of Vally Forge Hospital, you mean,* Post thought. Abruptly, the utter wastefulness of spending time this way struck the lump of tension in his stomach and reacted explosively.

"Come on!" he barked. "Let's get going!" He pushed through them with his bag in his hand and shouldered the door at the side of the briefing room platform. "On the field! Come on, on the field! Your equipment's been loaded already."

"You mean we're going right now?" another crewman asked, dog-trotting beside Post as he strode across the asphalt, his legs scissoring. "But the flight wasn't scheduled until tomorrow! I haven't even said goodbye to my wife."

"Mine doesn't even know I'm not in Pennsylvania," Post spat out without turning his head. He continued to make for the towering bulk of the clumsy three-stage rocket, conscious of the sound of seven pairs of hurrying and confused feet behind him.

STAGE ONE dropped away, the Stage Two rockets cut in, and Post closed his red-and-white teeth on his mangled lip again.

No sense fighting it, the trained and methodical part of his mind told

him. *Relax as much as you can—it's easiest that way.*

But he fought it, and though he blacked out, he won, because his broken lips moved into a smile as he saw Earth falling away below the portside fin for just a second before the breath blew out of his lungs.

But he lost, as well, because he knew that whatever he had done—no matter how much ahead of schedule the ship orbited—the panic-stricken fools back on Earth would ensure that he was too late.

Conscious of the panic that rode his own shoulders, Post drove the crew like an enfuried automaton, once they had established their orbit and were in free fall.

"We'll have time for the thrills of deepspace pioneering when we're back in the cocktail lounges, you men! Get those cargo hatches open, and get those materials out. They want this rocket back on the ground for another shot next week."

*Faster, he kept thinking. Faster and still faster! Maybe there'll be time after all.* But, though most of the space-station sections were no more than plastic skin stretched over pre-cut members that were easily-manuevered in free fall, he still knew that whatever was done here in space was constantly being hamstrung on the ground. The other two stages must already have been recovered, overhauled, and refueled, there, but they had to wait for the top stage to return. And the panic-stricken headlines would grind on, as government after government fragmented away from the UN, and the fuses ticked away.

"You! The one in green!" he barked into the microphone. "Watch that girder!" He heard the man curse, and watched him swing the beam back into line. They were clustered around the packets of construction materials,

their suits all colors, the white helmets showing up the scarlet Double S of Space Service, the unified military project.

There was an extra suit hanging in the lockers. Wesley's suit—his, now, but he couldn't wear it. *Watch that heart*, they'd told him. You can fool yourself in space. Five hundred pounds might not feel like five hundred pounds, but your muscles and your arteries would know.

He cursed the knowledge, and clamped his fingers harder around the microphone. Work for fifteen years, telling them what Von Braun finally repeated, and because *he'd* had the right backing, they had to okay the project. Ride the tin-can rockets into the purple night, feeling your intestines swell and shift, freezing your fingers, frying from heat-shock in the helmet. Hang by your chute straps while you suck at your breakaway oxygen bottle, hoping it'll get you down to breathable air all right, while what's left of the rocket howls down into the desert below you. Kick and scream and bang on desks, until enough people get off their duffs, and you've got halfway decent equipment at last. Wreck your eyes at night, swill out your guts with cold and gruesome coffee while you read the reports from Dayton, while you analyze the figures from White Sands. Ride the rockets some more, and then break your spine in a sweltering day coach for Point Mugu to see what the Navy's doing.

And, finally, get the project set up, and get the rocket. The rocket! Hydrazine, instead of Plutonium. Three stagers, instead of one. Why? Sorry, Colonel, they're too busy to devote time to experimenting with controlled fission.

And for what? Watch the day of the first flight coming closer and closer on the calendar—and read the newspapers. Listen to the wolves howling on the Security Council floor. Space-

station? Certainly, Colonel. Wonderful launching platform.

And have your heart conk out.

When he remembered how the gauntleted fist had closed around his throat, sweat broke out on his forehead.

Two years in Valley Forge. They'd gotten the heart under control, but they weren't going to let the knowledge in his head run loose where *that* couldn't be supervised. Sit and stagnate. Visiting days? Twice a month, Col—pardon me, *Mister* Post. See your wife? Certainly. Right through the wide spaces in that mesh. Security, you know.

And then the lid danced on the kettle. We've had to put the cargo rocket pilot under surveillance, Mis—pardon me, *Colonel* Post. And it's funny, but—ha ha—there don't seem to be any other qualified pilots around. So you'll be first into space after all, Col—pardon us, *General* Post. Isn't that grand? We'll have to hurry, of course. Move the shooting date up. There's a lot of confusion at the base, it seems. Wesley started talk that we wouldn't construct the station, now that the war's so close. Not that there is a war coming, of course. Just a little unrest. But won't that station make a wonderful launching platform, now?

Oh, yes—hope your heart holds out.

*"Watch that girder, damn it!"* he bellowed into the microphone.

THE RADIO message from Earth rushed up and caught them. They swung down over northern Canada, and the beam was there in their path.

"Time to listen to the foaming cleanser," Devereaux said, and Wilkes snapped the switch on the receiver.

"MR-I this is Ajax. Come in, MR-I."

"MR-I," Wilkes acknowledged.

"MR-I, orders follow: hold your orbit. Repeat. Hold your orbit. Supply rockets will be fired to you. Assemble station components. Repeat. Assemble

station components. Make preparations to maintain position indefinitely. MR-2 under construction. You will be relieved when practicable. Make all possible preparations for defense. Repeat. Make all possible preparations for defense. The United States is at war. Repeat. At war. End of message."

Post slumped. Where the knot of tension and anticipation had been in his stomach, there was now only sickness.

"Who? Damn it, who!"

"What's been hit? Have they hit Glendale?"

"Defense? Against what?"

The sudden babble of questioning broke around Post's head and spattered around the control room like spray. He thought about all the initials that had sprung up on Earth in the last twenty years. UN, UNDELSA, UNOSAF, USE. Some of the older ones—USA, UK, USSR. All beginning with Union, or United. Agglomerations, conglomerations, federations. We must all hang together, or we shall all hang separately. But we must not hand together in too-large groups. After all, just because you *look* like one of our kind of bananas doesn't mean you're one of the bunch.

*Ladies and Gentlemen, the saw-toothed voice said in his mind, this morning the United States was attacked by alphabet soup.*

"At ease!" It was his own voice, striking out, but it surprised him nevertheless. While the other men in the control room stopped to look at him, he kicked forward, reached behind the ship's big transmitter, and pulled a tube out of its socket. He dropped the tube into a pocket of his coveralls and swung around to face the men.

"Orders as follows:" he said. "We've got two weeks' rations. They'll stretch for four. We've got three weeks' air. We'll stretch that as far as

we can. Any of you men know how to work a chemical still? We'll be getting our water from some pretty peculiar sources.

"Now. Two of us will sleep while six work. At the end of every four hour shift, two men will be replaced. Anybody seen any blueprints of this section we brought up? No? All right, I'll tell you what goes here. We start now."

"How about finding out what's going on down there?" a voice cut in. That was Ericson, the Navy navigator.

"Finding out? Sure—listen in on the receiver all you want to—if you'd rather not sleep on your off-watch. Want to ask questions? Sorry—transmitter's closed down until further notice. I've got no more idea than you have of what might be coming our way, but I'm not going to have somebody triangulating this ship."

"But who did it?" Wilkes asked querulously. "Why didn't they even tell us that much?"

"Maybe they didn't know themselves," Post said, sighing with impatience. "Does it matter?"

It didn't, really. He assigned duty sections and cycled them out of the airlock, going back to his intercom microphone when the screens showed them milling around the discharged pieces of unassembled space-station sections.

*I'll have to go out there myself, if it gets rough,* he thought. He didn't relish the thought. Right now, his directions over the microphone were enough. Later, when they became clumsy from exhaustion and hunger, he'd have to be right there.

The pointlessness of the entire operation weighed him down. It would be months, even at top speed, before the station was completely assembled and operational. By then, the war could be over—one way or the other. Could a nation at war keep fountaining materials out here, rocket after rocket, man after man? For what? The mili-

tary value of a space station depended on its ability to fire bombs into strategic locations. With armies muddled all over the map, as they would be in a month or two, which were the strategic locations going to be? It would be like firing a shotgun into a barnyard. Kill a dozen chickens on the off-chance of winging a fox.

If some other country had even this much of a station up, it would be a different set of conditions. Then the maintenance of this effort would fall under the head of second-stage planning. But there was no other station.

So the whole thing was somebody's panic-move. They'd be thinking it over in Washington right now—if there *was* still a Washington. And pretty soon the order to destroy the barely-started section would come through, and they'd drop back to Earth—and he'd never see space again.

But, meanwhile, the men had to be kept busy. He could feel the lag already. The snap and drive had gone out of him, and the men were confused to begin with. That blabbermouth pilot, Wesley, had wrecked their morale at the base, and they'd never quite recovered. He'd had to push and shove them along.

*The same way I had to push the project along,* he thought bitterly. *Fight, fight, fight, and it was like punching pillows.* Sorry Colonel, we're in hearty agreement with you of course, but the appropriation—well, that is a pretty steep figure, you'll admit. It had taken Von Braun and Ley and a national magazine to convince them—to hell with what their own people had been telling them for years.

"Slack off on that line! You want a ton of aluminum through your helmet?"

And what had it all been for? It had been too late when they yanked him out of Valley Forge. They were going under, with the rest of the world, and they were trying to find an anchor

out in space, but they hadn't really had a chance.

"That's it! You, in the yellow, fit the end of that curved member into the socket on your keel spar. Blue, stand by with that welder. Come on, snap it up, snap it up!"

But there wasn't going to be much snap out of them. They were moving sluggishly, and thinking the same way. A thousand miles wasn't enough to separate Wilkes from Glendale, or himself from Eleanor, he realized.

DEVEREAUX and McCullers came in through the airlock as Wilkes and Porter stood by to go out. McCullers stripped off his suit and fell on his bunk, but Devereaux waited until the other two men were outside and pushed himself over to Post. His face was pale, and even thinner.

"All right, General, it's been a week, and no word," Devereaux sighed wearily.

"No word, and no supplies," Post said curtly. Devereaux was one of his own people—Air Force. The man had more of a right to his statements than the rest of them.

"What do you think?"

But he was getting under Post's skin anyway.

"Think? Major, what I think would surprise you. But it wouldn't change anything."

"Do you think there's anything left down there, General?" the man insisted.

Post felt the unexpected jolt of anger trembling at his fingertips. "For all I know, the chimps are starting all over again down there. If they aren't, maybe I think they should be—but that's none of your damned business. Your business is to get some sleep so you'll be fit to carry out orders."

To his surprise, Devereaux ignored what was practically another order. The man stayed where he was. "The big receiver's still picking up broadcasts in Russian," he said.



"Can you understand Russian, Major?"

"No, sir."

"Neither can I. Neither can anyone else in this crew. And if you think that the USSR is the one we're fighting, you may be right—but I'd like to remind you that there are six other likely candidates. We've seen nothing to indicate any special preoccupation with the United States on anybody's part. In my opinion, the explosions we've seen weren't too particular about where they happened."

"Yes, sir." Devereaux fell silent for a moment. Then he started again, speaking hesitantly at first.

"General, it's no secret in the Air Force that you've spent most of your life trying to get this project organized. It's so little of a secret that a lot of us thought you'd wind up like Mitchell did."

"What about it?" Post demanded.

Devereaux reddened. "Well, sir, I've sort of felt the same way you did."

"I know that. And stop constructing your sentences like a schoolboy. What're you driving at?"

"Snails, sir," Devereaux said, stumbling. "I mean—the ancient symbol of human thought is the snail. Have you ever watched snails, General? They're the most fumbling, erratic, downright stupid creatures on Earth. For a long time, I've thought of that as a pretty apt symbol."

"I see," Post said. His eyes went back on the starboard screen, watching six men wrestling with plastic and metal. "Swing that sub-assembly into alignment!" he shouted. He turned his head and looked wearily at Devereaux. "Get your sleep, Major."

The man looked at him strangely. "All right, General," he said finally. "But you see what I mean? It doesn't really matter what the biggest part of the world's people say or think—they don't know where they're going anyway. It's only a few people—"

"Like you and me, eh, Devereaux?"

That go out and cram progress down their throats?"

"Yes, General."

"Get your sleep."

Post turned his back on him, and kept watching the screen until he heard the scuff of the major's shoes as he kicked off, and the thud as he touched his bunk.

So Devereaux had gone into space because he wanted to be a pioneer, eh? And the people on Earth—he repressed a slight, astonishing, shudder—were snails who, in their fumbling way, were making it impossible for men like Devereaux to give them their true destiny.

Interesting phenomenon, exhaustion. Almost like alcohol in the way it stripped away a man's attention for the detail required to maintain whatever personality he wanted the world to see. Generally speaking, worthwhile results justified their motives—and the motives were usually retouched for public examination anyway. So it was only at times like these that you could see what really made the Devereauxs of the world tick.

He caught his eyes in the act of closing and jerked his head up.

Later, back on the ground, he would be free to feel anger at the man. Right now, he was doing his job.

But he would have to keep this new factor in mind. It was only one of the many he would have to begin cataloging and balancing off against each other as the men reacted to their worsening situation. For it had been a week since the orders were broadcast, and since then he had heard nothing else from the United States. The supply rockets hadn't come, either. He had a pretty fair idea of how long it would take to build a new top stage.

And it was far longer than the three weeks they had left.

**A**T THE END of two more weeks, there still hadn't been any supply rockets, and still no word from Earth.

The ship hadn't carried a telescope up with her. That was coming later. As they swung around and around the world, Post tried to see what he could through the few viewports, but most of the time that wasn't very much. The screens wouldn't focus at that distance, and finally he worked himself into Wesley's suit and went outside. He hung face-down beside the ship, trying to make sense out of the jumbled landscape below and out of the occasional clouds that boiled up out of it, but they were far too high for any kind of detailed observation.

It was only after he swung himself back inside the ship that he realized that he had actually drifted in free space for the first time in his life. It struck him that he hadn't even noticed the stars.

As the fourth week began, Post took a regular working shift in space. Most of the section they had brought up with them was now assembled, and as he fitted metal to metal, or stretched plastic over the framework, he relentlessly kept the realization of the futility of their work from entering the channels of his mind.

"Well, General?" Ericson asked, floating beside him. "What are you going to do?"

"Follow orders," Post snapped. He turned his red-rimmed eyes to look at the navigator.

"Isn't it true, General, that there's been no word whatsoever from Ajax? We certainly haven't seen any supplies. We have a week's half-rations left, and about as much air. We have no idea of the situation on the ground. Have you heard any English language broadcasts at all?"

"Code."

"Well, then, sir, do you propose to land the ship when our supplies reach the critical level?"

*So it's out now,* Post thought. *Somebody was going to ask it, and now it's out.*

"If no additional supplies reach us, Lieutenant, I will make my decision at the critical time. Meanwhile, clear the communications channel," he rasped, conscious of the unwieldiness of his vocal chords and the thickness of his tongue. There were slight foggy spots in front of his eyes, and his lungs were gasping for air.

Ericson said, "Yes, sir," and brought the point of his welder down on a joint.

*But I'm going to have to make the decision,* Post thought. *And I don't know what it's going to be.*

He visualized the completed space station as it would have looked, swinging around the Earth like an inner moon. A shuttle point for the Lunar spacers. An observatory. The ideal weather station. *And the ideal peacemaker, I thought. Now, I'm not so sure.* In a way, even the small part of the station that they had assembled was the outermost milestone of human progress.

First the Babylonians. Then the Egyptians. Then the Greeks, and the Romans. Inching upward, torn by cross-purposes, each period of action followed by one of reaction, of stasis. Stagnation, or consolidation? Had the material progress that had reached its peak in Rome needed the Middle Ages as a sort of resting place, where, while the hurried tumbling forward had slowed to a stately walk, the arts and philosophies had been given time to realign themselves, to assimilate the knowledge which man had carelessly tossed into the storehouse of his culture?

And then the industrial revolution, and the mad drive forward again, even faster this time. Was this the peak? Was the world going to fight itself into stasis again? Was he, without knowing it, a man born out of his proper

historical era? He'd pushed and fought for this last monument to physical progress. Had he been fighting the inevitable action of a cultural cycle?

He caught himself hanging over a brace and staring vacantly at the stars. He shook his head violently. Lord—sleeplessness was making a philosopher out of him!

He felt Ericson's touch on his arm. "Off watch, General."

"Thanks, Ericson," he muttered, and kicked himself toward the ship. But, still and all, you couldn't chart human progress as a straight line. The line rose and fell, tacking into all kinds of backwaters, taking four steps where two would do, kinking and twisting, and only slowly reaching toward its objective—he stopped. At a snail's pace?

Not the way Devereaux meant it.

HE CYCLED in through the airlock with Ericson and saw Devereaux at the big transmitter. He twisted his mouth into a thin and exhausted smile. He'd left the coveralls, with the missing tube in their pocket, hanging in the control room.

He heard Ericson's sharp breath as the navigator saw what the Co-Pilot was doing. Devereaux, too, must have heard them come in. But he stayed at the transmitter, twisting the dials and speaking calmly into the microphone.

"CQ, CQ, CQ. USA space-station calling CQ. Over." He listened for a moment, then moved the dial to a new setting and tried again, using the same amateur radio operator's call for "Come in, anybody."

Post unfastened his helmet and swung it back. "What country are we over, Major?" he asked quietly.

Devereaux turned around and shrugged. "We're crossing Europe. Besides, anybody's liable to be anywhere, by this time. You shouldn't have left that tube accessible if you were going to go outside and leave the radio untended, General."

"Get any answers?"

Devereaux shook his head. "Nothing real. I got a burst of Spanish a while ago—or maybe it was Portuguese."

"He's lying," Ericson suddenly broke out. "He's a spy." The man braced his feet to push him at Devereaux.

The major shook his head and smiled at Post, ignoring Ericson entirely, as though the navigator were incapable of understanding Devereaux' motivations.

"I'm sure the General will agree with me that I've come to a logical decision based on factors which supersede chauvinism," he said. "Obviously, we occupy a unique position. We have here, in even this fragment of what a completed station should be, the greatest instrument for progress that humanity has ever had. We may be Americans, but our first obligation is to the advancement of the human race as a whole. The USA hasn't been heard of in three weeks. I think we can safely assume that it no longer is the USA."

"Very well, with no source of supply, we'd have to abandon the station very shortly—if we persist in the view that this is a purely national effort which ends along with the nation primarily responsible for it. But, if we consider that we represent human progress, not national advancement, then we also represent all humanity—and we can ask all humanity to support us. After all, what does it matter which group serves as the agency that enables men to reach the stars? As things stand, we're in a position to demand help. They may not like it, down on Earth, but they'll have to supply us—because how do they know we haven't a bomb or two up here with us?"

Post heard Ericson curse softly beside him. His own first impulse was to order Devereaux away from the transmitter, but two things were stopping

him. First, he wasn't sure the major would obey him. Second, he wondered if Devereaux' stand was really so far different from his own. Hadn't he, himself, forced the station program along with every means at his command, regardless of what anyone else wanted? Hadn't he bullied and brow-beaten all the various government agencies, unifying them into action with the threat of what would happen if they didn't build the first station? And now Devereaux proposed frightening all the Earth's diversified nations into supplying the station, and thus maintaining Man's drive into space, with the threat of a hostile station? Was there, really, any difference?

And then he thought of a difference. "The United States is at war, Major. What do you propose to do if you get a reply from the enemy?"

Devereaux moved his mouth in a superciliously surprised expression. "General," he said chidingly, "isn't it clear to you that if we are representatives of humanity as a whole, then we cannot consider ourselves as an arm of the United States, that, essentially, we *have* no enemy?"

"Selling out, are you?" Ericson said, his voice trembling with outrage.

"Still cramming progress down the throats of snails, eh?" Post asked, the sound of his own words surprising him. He felt the sweat running over him inside the suit.

**ERICSON** jumped for Devereaux then, shooting across the room as his legs threw him across the room from the bulkhead against which he'd braced them. And Post found himself diving after him.

They crashed into Devereaux and sent him rebounding from the overhead. He came spinning lazily down. "What're you doing?" he shouted. "Can't you see it's the only answer?"

Ericson reached out and twisted his

arms behind him. "Not for us, it isn't." His face was red, and the lank blond hair was drifting over his face.

Post took Devereaux' flailing legs. "We'll strap him in his bunk, Lieutenant."

"Right."

Devereaux was silent, his face pale and sweat-streaked.

Post wished that it was as simply patriotic a matter for him as it was for Ericson. But it wasn't. Basically, he and Devereaux were much more alike than the Lieutenant and Post were. They both saw the same symbols. Even the ship and its cargo were a symbol. But each man interprets things his own way—and Devereaux' interpretation was not the same as his.

"Call the men in, Lieutenant," Post said. "We're going home."

Both Ericson and Devereaux stiffened, with equally incredulous expressions.

"We might as well, now," Post said. "Devereaux' given our location away. They'll be sending homing rockets up at us pretty soon."

"Don't be a fool, Post!" Devereaux said harshly. "The United States is a radioactive hell by now. Land somewhere else."

Post shook his head, feeling the cost of the effort in his tired neck muscles. "It's the only country we've got, Major."

*And the only world.* Basically, they were going back because one man had tried to enforce his interpretation of certain abstract concepts—visualized as symbols—over the interpretations of other men. Just as Post, himself, had tried to force something into being at a time when the world was not in agreement with him.

Or, perhaps, even if in agreement, caught in the grip of something beyond its ability to combat. If there were cycles of material progress followed by cycles of stability and con-

solidation, then there was no point in trying to overcome them. It was possible that humanity had a limited capacity for too much progress in any direction, and that all attempts to force it beyond that capacity were useless.

*Just so much sand in the hour glass,* he thought. When the flow stopped, time didn't end—but the glass had to be turned over, and the flow reversed.

He thought of what Earth must be like, now. Smashed and wounded, with the great factories broken and the power lines down. *They'll be back to wood fires and bows and arrows if they're not helped.* They won't need a space station half as much as they'll need teachers and historians to keep the records of what they had, and will have to build back to before they can leap ahead again.

The snail's pace of human progress.

Back and forth, side to side. But they'd get there, eventually. Maybe, in the light of what they had done, they were going to go in the opposite direction for a while. But they'd be back. It was just a matter of going home and getting a few interpretations straight.

He looked at the screen and saw the men come drifting toward the ship from the station section. *That'll be out there a long time, I think.*

He looked at Devereaux, who was accusing him with his eyes. Post hadn't intended to explain this, but, perhaps because of that look, he said, "We're not going back—we're going ahead."

And the shipload of pioneers drove ahead to the Earth, a symbol of human progress.



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# THE PLOT - FORMS OF SCIENCE FICTION

A Special Survey  
by James Gunn

## FOREWORD



ANY universally-accepted definition for science fiction is as difficult to arrive at as one for the novel or the poem—and properly so. A literary form which can be confined within the rigid limits of a

definition has outworn its possibilities and has ceased to grow; science fiction is still vital, still amorphous, still something different to every reader. But attempts at definition have their purpose and their place—one of their places, surely—is in literary criticism; and one of the permissible, possibly useful, purposes is to circumscribe the field without limiting it, something akin to the definition of the novel as

a long piece of fiction. The problem of circumscribing science fiction is, however, particularly complicated by the fact that it has so lately emerged as a literary type that its boundaries are nebulous, its domain is shifting; and its critics and analysts, without tradition or history to fall back upon, are in agreement upon only one thing—that there is such a thing as science fiction.

The nature of the problem can be appreciated by examining a few of the definitions offered by various authorities in the field:

Science-fiction concerns itself with the world of the future, a world whose political, social and economic life has been shaped by the expansion of scientific knowledge. *Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas. (1)*

...science fiction is fantasy wearing a tight girdle. *Sam Merwin, Jr. (2)*

"Scientifiction" (a word coined by the magazines which do fancies based on current scientific hypotheses—rocket ships, fourth-dimensional stuff, and so on)... *Phil Strong*. (3)

A piece of scientific fiction is a narrative of an imaginary invention or discovery in the natural sciences and consequent adventures and experiences. The invention must be imaginary at the time the romance is written, an imaginary airplane, space-flier, radio, rocket, atomic bomb, or death ray.... It must be a scientific discovery—something that the author at least rationalizes as possible to science. *O. Bailey*. (4)

To be science fiction, not fantasy, an honest effort at prophetic extrapolation of the known must be made.... Prophetic extrapolation can derive from a number of different sources, and apply in a number of fields. Sociology, psychology and parapsychology are, today, not true sciences; therefore instead of forecasting future results of applications of sociological science of today, we must forecast the development of a science of sociology. *John W. Campbell, Jr.* (5)

...actually science-fiction embraces all imaginative fiction which grows out of scientific concepts, whether in mathematics, or geology, or nuclear-fission, or biology, or any scientific concept whatsoever, whether already demonstrated or whether projected out of the writer's imagination into future space and time. *August Derleth*. (6)

...it may be suggested that science fiction is composed of "supernatural" writing for materialists. You may read every science-fiction story that is true science fiction, and never once have to compromise with your id. The stories all have rational explanations, provided you are willing to grant the word "rational" a certain elasticity. *Groff Conklin*. (7)

These seven men are discussing the same literary phenomenon, but their fields of exclusion and inclusion are often quite different. The utmost in exclusion is achieved, perhaps, by Bailey, who is refuted by Campbell and Derleth. Bailey limits science fiction to a story of a discovery in the natural sciences which must be *imaginary* at the time of writing; Campbell broadens the definition to include the sociological and psychological sciences, and Derleth admits any scientific concept even if already in use. Healy and

McComas project science fiction into the world of the future, and Merwin is, to understate the matter a little, rather general. Everything considered, however, I believe that generality is the most satisfactory; usage, not dictionaries or critical articles, determines definitions, and it is better to include too much than to exclude something generally accepted to be science fiction. As I have observed in "The Philosophy of Science Fiction" (*Dynamic Science Fiction*, March & June 1953), I agree generally with Conklin—with the emphasis on the rational explanation.

The unsatisfactory nature of Bailey's definition requires further amplification, since his book is an extended critical discussion of the field. Generally speaking, a definition in such a work serves as a convenient means of limiting one's material—a necessary device in a genre as extensive, as old, and as untouched by the critical pen as science fiction. As a device, it serves Bailey's purpose admirably; his "imaginary invention or discovery" desideratum forming an effective framework upon which to hang his historical survey. At the same time, unfortunately, Bailey's definition acts as an authoritative voice to limit not only the material with which he, as the author, wishes to deal but also the

1. "Adventures In Time and Space" (hereafter referred to as AT&S), p. xi.
2. *Startling Stories* (hereafter referred to as SS), January 1950, p. 150.
3. "The Other Worlds" (hereafter referred to as TOW), edited by Phil Strong. Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing Co., 1942, p. 9.
4. *Op. cit.*, p. 10.
5. "Of Worlds Beyond", edited by L. A. Eschbach, Reading Penna: Fantasy Press, 1947, p. 86.
6. "Strange Ports of Call" (hereafter referred to as SPC), edited by August Derleth. New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1948.
7. "The Best of Science Fiction" (hereafter referred to as TBSF), edited by Groff Conklin. New York: Crown, 1946, p. xxi.

literary field itself. And an imaginary invention or discovery is not essential to a science fiction story, as a hasty inspection of any anthology or current magazine would reveal; a glance at Bailey's book itself would show that he has used as examples such books as James Hilton's "Lost Horizon" <sup>1</sup> Jack London's "The Scarlet Plague", <sup>2</sup> and so forth, works which include no imaginary invention or discovery. Nor, as Campbell pointed out, need the invention—if present—be in the natural sciences; nor is it necessary that the invention be imaginary (here again Bailey is somewhat inconsistent, for he includes such non-imaginary inventions as those described in Jules Verne's "Around the World in Eighty Days" <sup>3</sup> or his "Five Weeks in a Balloon", <sup>4</sup>).

The most significant objection to Bailey's definition and critical method, however, is that it is not functional—or, to be more precise, the nature of the invention or discovery contained in a science fiction work does not function as the most revealing aspect of the work. It is not the most significant ingredient of the science fiction story. That ingredient is plot or theme.

**T**HERE ARE many ways of classifying science fiction stories, most of them useful; the only way of choosing between them, perhaps, is as to their degree of usefulness in the circumstances. Bailey, for instance, subdivides his book in the following manner:

- A. The Wonderful Machine
- B. The Wonderful Journey
- C. Utopias and Satires
- D. The "Gothic" Romance

Later in his volume he adds such classifications as "The Occult and the Supernatural," "The Historic Ro-

mance," "Crime and Detection," "The Cosmic Romance." It is, as I have said before, a satisfactory arrangement for a historic summary.

Groff Conklin, for the purposes of his first anthology, classified his stories under six headings:

- The Atom
- The Wonders of Earth
- The Superscience of Man
- Dangerous Inventions
- Adventures in Dimension
- From Outer Space

In his second anthology he added "Far Traveling."

Campbell, as we noted in the preceding section, suggests three broad divisions: prophecy stories, philosophical stories, and adventure science fiction. This classification is of potential analytical value and could be the basis for a revealing discussion. Prophecy and philosophical stories, for instance, are principally "problem" stories, one of the favorite types of science fiction, which would be subdivided according to the type of problem presented, something like this:

1. The development of man
  - Technologically
  - Mentally
  - Psychologically
  - Sociologically
  - Politically
2. The degeneration and/or self-destruction of man (with the same divisions as above)
3. The machine
4. Mutations
5. Aliens
6. Academic or purely-philosophical problems

The possible value of such a classification is apparent: the problems, and the stories written around them, include, directly or by analogy, summations and perhaps solutions of current problems.

"The development or degeneration of man" points out directions the human race may take, and thereby presents possible answers to questions

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1. New York: W. Morrow, 1933.  
 2. New York: Macmillan, 1915.  
 3. Paris: Hetzel, 1872.  
 4. New York: Appleton, 1869.

puzzling the world today. "The machine" discusses a problem which has been a matter of deep concern and debate since the inception of the industrial age. "Mutations" is a subject for our era—the atomic era with its dangers of mutating radiations—and, together with the stories on "Aliens," suggests answers to questions of minority and racial problems. "Academic or purely philosophical problems" has stories of no immediate application, perhaps, but which contain the inherent possibilities of the abstract.

The one great disadvantage of this basis for discussion is its lack of inclusiveness. For this reason, or for others which I have already discussed, the other systems of classification above are unsatisfactory as well for a comprehensive analysis of the breadth of modern science fiction. That type of analysis is most rewarding, I believe, on the basis of plot. Science fiction, as we noted in my earlier article,<sup>1</sup> is a medium of ideas; and the only way ideas can work themselves out dramatically is in terms of plot.

There are, basically, two main types of plots—in unspecialized fiction as well as the specialized form which is science fiction: plots in which the conflict is between man and his environment, and those in which the conflict is initiated by a character's activities. The first of these I have called in the following outline "plots of circumstance"; the second, "plots of creation." The significant differences between the two lie in the nature of the stories constructed around the plots. Under plots of circumstances, there are the adventure story and the problem story, which depict characters battling against circumstances for which they are not responsible but from which they can extract themselves, sometimes—or over which they can exercise some control. Under plots of creation, there are the stories of the

mad or incautious scientist, the stories of the creative scientist, the stories of experimentation which turns out well or ill; in these stories the responsibility for the situation rests on the shoulders of the characters. These differences are vitally important in determining the nature of the story.

These two basic plot types, I suggested above, are as true for ordinary fiction as for science fiction; the difference lies in what Conklin calls "supernaturalism for materialists." To put it more explicitly, in science fiction something happens which should not happen, in the ordinary run of things; and this occurrence is reconciled to the ordinary run of things. The distinguishing mark of fantasy is that this reconciliation is not necessary, and usually does not take place.

## 1. PLOTS OF CIRCUMSTANCE



LOTS OF circumstance are by far the most popular forms for science fiction stories; out of 145 stories analyzed, 125 of them belonged to this major category. For a number of reasons, my distribution

chart can lay no claims to any sort of statistical accuracy; principal among them is the reason inherent in the nature of anthologies, since the chart attempts to classify and total all the stories in five anthologies whose plot-forms fall under the various divisions and subdivision of the outline. Anthologies are, by definition, collections of the best; as such, they are limited in extent, and cannot be considered as typical of the field as a whole. They are, moreover, the selections of one or two editors and inevitably are more representative of the individual tastes of the selectors than of the gamut of the genre. This shows up most clearly in the collections by August Derleth,

1. *Op. cit.*

who includes only one story under "plots of creation," and that a variant. Darleth is fondest of stories about "modern men in the modern world;" twenty-four out of a total of forty-two stories fall under this classification and nine of the remainder under "a being in an alien environment."

Despite the statistical deficiencies of the chart, its results are illuminating when they are as one-sided as those shown in the distribution between the two main types. The reasons why plots of circumstance are so overwhelmingly favored are not so hard to find. Plots of creation are limited and difficult to write; plots of circumstance provide an immediate dramatic suspense and identification with the characters: few of us are creators but we all know what it is to battle against circumstances. In this category, the possibilities are unlimited.

The most important considerations in plots of circumstance are the protagonist and the environmental situation in which he finds himself. The protagonist can be in either his own environment or an alien one. If in his own environment, he can be, in relation to ourselves, only in the past, the present, or the future. There are, thus, four possible variations:

- A. A being in an alien environment
- B. Modern man in the modern world
- C. A past being in the past
- D. A future being in a future world

These subdivisions make up the plots of circumstance—with the addition of one more which could probably be classified under the categories above, but which is given its own section because of its thematic importance, and because, in the final analysis, environment in this type has little influence upon its basic nature:

#### E. Mutations

There are two other possibilities which it might be well to mention in passing: an alien on an alien world in the present, and a dimensional being

in another dimension. Since there is no contact with earth, the time element (earth time, of course) in the first is unimportant and would probably never come up; it is probable, moreover, that they are not science fiction at all, but fantasy, since there can be no rational explanation without some reference to earth or mankind.

It may be that every possible science fiction story cannot be classified according to the outline I have suggested; there are, perhaps, some classifications which I have forgotten—or which have not occurred to me. But I have not yet found a story which did not fit into one division or another. There is the additional danger of misclassifying or duplicating a classification: for instance, a story might be classified as either "an ancient being or primitive man in a modern human environment" or "modern man in the modern world facing problems introduced from the past." Another might be classified as "an alien in a human environment in the present" or "a modern man in the modern world facing problems introduced from another dimension or another world or space." Still another could be "a future being in the present" or "modern man in the modern world facing problems introduced from the future." In these cases the decision of where the story belongs must be made on the basis of viewpoint or, if that is shifting, of emphasis. The differences, not so obvious in theory, become readily apparent on inspection of the individual stories. Theodore Sturgeon's "Killozer!"<sup>1</sup> for instance, would be a story of a modern man in the modern world facing problems introduced from the past, rather than an ancient being in a modern human environment, because the emphasis is always on what the men are going to do about it—whether they will meet the menace, conquer it, and survive.

1. *TBSF*, pp. 155-209.



### A. A Being In An Alien Environment

**P**ROBABLY the favorite science fiction plot-structure is that of "a being in an alien environment," a fact not so obvious from the distribution chart as it would be from a general analysis, although even on the chart the number of stories under this heading (43) is only exceeded by that under "a modern man in the modern world" (50). But at least nine-tenths of the lead novels in *Startling Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories* have been of this type; there are as many, if not more, in *Planet Stories* and others of the magazines running more to the adventurous type of story. Almost every science fiction novel Edgar Rice Burroughs ever wrote belongs to this category (the "Tarzan" series is not science fiction, although it is close to the borderline); A. Merritt wrote only a few novels of any other type. And the list of the "elder statesmen of science fiction" who wrote almost exclusively in this classification might go on for several pages.

This is not the type of story which has secured for science fiction its reputation for prophecy. It is primarily an adventure story theme, although other and more significant uses have been made of it, as we shall see. It is, in the final analysis, the primal essence of science fiction, the earliest exciting breath which drew its first and still-unwavering devotees. Its origins go back as far as the beginnings of science fiction, and the pre-science fiction tales of wonder before; Poe, for instance, wrote many such stories. The fundamental suspense and drama of the plot-type are the reasons for its popularity then as now; place one person, or a small group, in a completely new environment where they must solve the riddle of their circumstances, seek out in some cases the bases of the new civilization into which they have been projected, fight off singlehanded

the menaces of an alien world—all these for survival, and you have a story of the greatest possible suspense potential. That this suspense can be used to carry something besides the story-line, or the reader's escapist interest, is what has in the recent past—and may in the future—rescue this type from insignificance.

The alien quality of the environment depends, naturally, upon the identity of the character placed in it, and the four principal subdivisions of this classification are predicated upon that fact. One can have as one's protagonist:

1. A modern man
2. An ancient being or primitive man
3. An alien
4. A future being

Except for the alien, these variations are based, obviously, upon a position in time relative to our own; and, again except for the alien, the protagonists listed are native to earth. Collectively, then, they bracket the field of possibility: a principal character can be either native to earth or alien; if native to earth, he can be native only in the past, the present, or the future.

The environments are not quite so all-inclusive. The alien is placed only in a human environment; presumably one could write a story about an alien in a non-human though still alien environment—but this belongs in the same category as the "alien on an alien world in the present" discussed above. It is possible, but without significance. Somewhere along the line there must be some relationship to earth, or earth problems, to push the story across the line from fantasy to science fiction.

#### 1. A MODERN MAN

**T**HE MODERN man as protagonist carries the greatest potential reader interest, chiefly because there is the greatest potential reader-identification, or empathy. His one fault as a hero



is that it is difficult to make his normal circumstances contain that ingredient of the strange that is basic to science fiction as well as fantasy. Ordinarily, this defect is remedied by placing the science of action only a few years in the future—where new things can happen, or current trends can come to fruition. But the largest ingredient of the strange is supplied when modern man is placed in entirely different circumstances from those with which his readers are familiar. For this there are three possibilities:

- a. The past
- b. A distant world, space, or dimension in the present
- c. The future

How to make the transition to these circumstances plausible is the science fiction author's principal initial task.

#### a. The past

The past is the place for violent contact with nature, for evocations of the carboniferous era, with its giant ferns and steaming swamps, pterodactyl and tyrannosaurus, or of the ice-age, with its cave men, mammoths and saber-toothed tigers.<sup>1</sup> It is the place where man becomes the hunted; where it is he, puny and insignificant, against the harshness and cruelty of a primitive world; where survival is the problem set by nature for the individual and the species.

The problem of reaching the past has been solved in various ways. One of them is to visualize a spot so isolated that it has had no contact with the outside world, and evolution has passed it by; in effect, this is the past—although it may not be in reality. An-

other method is by passage through time, via time-machine or accident. Although time-theories will be discussed in more detail below, these stories, it should be mentioned here, find it necessary to describe the shape of time in order to justify a passage through or around it. In some of the stories, time is pictured as a circle, spiraling like a spring, or branching like a fan or the limbs of a tree.

In Conan Doyle's "The Lost World",<sup>2</sup> perhaps the first example of the plot-type in science fiction, the first solution is used: a group of English explorers find in the depths of the Amazonian wilds a large area, which has been preserved from change by its position as a plateau surrounded by almost insurmountable cliffs. There they discover giant reptiles and primitive cave-men, holdovers from the Jurassic period. Their problem is survival and escape, solved eventually by the construction of a balloon out of skins which is inflated with hot air and lowers them over the cliffs. There is, in addition, a literary mystery connected with "The Lost World": Doyle suggests a sequel but this, like that to one of the Dr. Doolittle books of my youth (in which the doctor who can speak with animals is carried to the moon by

1. The way I've heard it (from L. Sprague de Camp), the pterosaur—which is the preferred modern term for "pterodactyl"—and the tyrannosaur did not exist in the Carboniferous period. For that matter, "Carboniferous" is a somewhat obsolete term in geology, which now tends to divide it into the Pennsylvanian and Mississippian. The sequel to "The Lost World" is "The Land of Mist" (1926), which is a sequel only in that it has many of the same characters. I am told that the story is hardly worth while, for anyone who enjoyed "The Lost World" and who hoped for more of a similar nature in "The Lost Mist", as it's little more than a tract of Spiritualistic propaganda. Challenger, Malone, and others undergo psychic experiences, and at long last are converted. RWL

2. London: Hodder and Stoughton, New York: Doran, 1912.

a huge bird), I have never been able to find.<sup>1</sup>

A situation similar to Doyle's is found in Edgar Rice Burroughs' "The Land That Time Forgot"<sup>2</sup>: a man is cast way on an island so protected, and so far out of normal trade-lanes, that it has remained untouched for hundreds of thousands of years. The cast-away finds there primeval conditions in which tribes exist in different stages of evolutionary development; his problem is to solve the riddle of the peculiar situation in its sociological and anthropological aspects and preserve his life.

OF A SLIGHTLY different type is P. Schuyler Miller's "The Sands of Time,"<sup>3</sup> in which a physicist invents a time-traveling machine which takes him back to the Cretaceous era. His picture of time is that of a coiled spring—a two-dimensional surface twisted in a third dimension. Ordinarily one follows along the spring from one day to the next; but if one cuts across the spring in the third dimension, one can take a shortcut to the future or return to the past. In this case, however, the spring has sixty million years to the turn, too great for practical values. The inventor's purpose is to prove that he has traveled in time; as proof he brings back pictures, eggs, a reptilian bird, and he plants a box in the past containing quills of radium and his name. He proves his point, but he never returns from a last romantic errand to the past. As an archeologist acquaintance reads the last of the story from excavations in

the sands of a Cretaceous beach, he was apparently killed by beings from another planet.

Such is the standard story about modern man in the past. But there is an offshoot of this classification which deserves special attention, because of its great popularity among writers and readers of science fiction.

Time is the playground of science fiction. When its authors tire of writing run-of-the-mill stories, they turn to the paradoxes of time for amusement. Almost every modern author in the genre has toyed with the idea for fun or bewilderment: van Vogt, Heinlein, Kuttner, de Camp—the list is almost endless. For, given enough time (as the saying goes) anything can happen. In science fiction it usually does.

The classic theory of time envisions it as a fourth dimension in which we exist as well as in the usual three. Or, to put it more explicitly, for an object to exist in our three-dimensional world it must have extensions in each of the three dimensions: breadth, thickness, and length; a one or two dimensional object cannot and does not exist in our world (except in theory). But three-dimensional extension alone is not enough for existence in our world; an object must have an extension in time. It must have duration; it must exist for a certain length of time. And, if this time is a dimension, one should be able to measure it, to travel in it, as one travels in the other three.

But time-travel into the past has inherent paradoxes that would have made Zeno throw away Achilles and the tortoise in envy. Suppose, for instance, in a classic example, one travels into the past and kills one's grandfather before he sires one's father: that leaves the time-traveler, to put it mildly, without apparent reason for being. Such a plot, however, is too old and hackneyed for use today. But in a variation by P. Schuyler Miller

1. As I recall, it was a giant moth; the book is "Doctor Doolittle's Garden", currently available. The sequel, "Doctor Doolittle on the Moon", can also be found—as well as the book following that: "Doctor Doolittle's Return". (Lippencott, publisher.) I, too, waited eagerly for long months after finishing "Doctor Doolittle's Garden" for the promised sequel. RWL.

2. Chicago: McClurg, 1924.

3. AT&S, pp. 115-143.

called "As Never Was" <sup>1</sup> a grandson contemplates such a murder as he ponders over a mysterious knife brought back from the future by his time-pioneering grandfather. The knife is fashioned from a metal harder than diamond, which earth-science cannot duplicate, and which later time explorers can find no trace of in the future. The grandson eventually finds the spot in the future his grandfather had reached: the ruins of a museum founded as a memorial to his grandfather and as a repository for the mysterious knife his grandfather had found in those ruins and brought back. The knife, therefore, existed in a closed, three-hundred year circle with no beginning and no end: his grandfather found the knife in some ruins, brought it back, placed it in a museum, whose ruins he was to visit and from which he was to bring back the knife again. It was a simple paradox with only one drawback—the knife the grandfather brought back was perfect, but the physicists sawed out a notch for tests. Where in that circle was the notch restored? How was the knife created in the first place? And how can the circle be broken?

ANOTHER such circle is described in "By His Bootstraps" by Anson MacDonald (pseud. for Robert Heinlein). <sup>2</sup> A code is necessary to understand any summary of this plot in which a Time-Gate provides a doorway to a future world. A man (One) steps through the Gate into the room of a student (Two) to persuade the student to step through the gate into the other world. Another man (Three), a twin to the first, steps through to persuade the student not to go through, but the student (Two) is knocked into the gate in a struggle and wakes up to find himself facing an

older man (Four) thirty thousand years in the future. The older man, the undisputed ruler of the world, persuades him (Two) to go back through the doorway to persuade another man to return; he finds he is acting out the role of the first man (One) to step through the Gate. Eventually he finds he is not only the student (Two) and the first man (One) but the objector (Three)—and still another man, who returns to the past of the future world and, after searching vainly for the ruler for a decade or so, finds that he (Two) himself has aged into the ruler (Four) he met when he first was propelled through the Gate. He searches curiously back through time for his own room and finds it, only to have a figure (Two) come hurtling through the Gate—and begin the circle anew. Again the question "how did the circle start?" remains a mystery and the plot a paradox.

Classic time-theories pretty well rule out time-travel into the past. A possibility suggested in some stories is that time has a certain inertia which, like physical inertia, tends to damp out any disturbance which an intrusion from a future period would introduce. Another and more fertile possibility is that entitled "probable times" in which time is pictured as branching like the limb of a tree. In this theory, each possible action, no matter how small, creates a branch whose existence depends on its probability; on the basis of this theory, two or more time streams can exist side by side and battle in the past for greater probability and insured existence. Using this theory a man can go back in time, alter some event subtly, and return to another time-stream; or he may leap time-boundaries and reach a time-stream where, for instance, the American colonies were defeated in their bid for independence.

A story in this vein, with an interesting twist, is "Brooklyn Project" by

1. *AT&S*, pp. 460-75.

2. *AT&S*, pp. 882-932.

William Tenn (pseud. for Philip Klass).<sup>1</sup> A military press-relations secretary is discussing an experiment in time with a group of reporters, ridiculing the idea that any change will occur as the experiment begins and disturbances are set up in the past. But as the mechanism vibrates back and forth through time, minute changes occur in the past which produces unnoticed changes in the group until, at the end, the secretary exclaims triumphantly that nothing has changed, even as he extends fifteen purple blobs. And this illustrates one of science fiction's thoughts about time-travel: if changes were made in the past, the present would change, but we would never know it—the change would automatically become part of our own history.

A story based upon this concept is "A Comedy of Eras" (one of a series) by Kelvin Kent (pseud. for Henry Kuttner),<sup>2</sup> which sets the idea down in a light-hearted situation. The mind of the protagonist, in this story, is sent back in time to inhabit the body of a man of the Elizabethan age; purpose—to determine once and for all the authorship of those plays attributed to Shakespeare. While there, the hero hobnobs with Shakespeare, Jonson, and Marlowe (who were,

probably, never together historically) and out of his memory of Shakespeare's plays suggests several plot-turns and developments to the Bard. On his return to the present, the hero informs the scientists that Shakespeare had done his work; he is then informed, in his turn, that he had inhabited the body of Sir Francis Bacon.

All things considered, science fiction's use of time has made for some interesting—at times dramatic, at times amusing—but seldom significant stories. There is nothing of any thematic importance involved in concepts of time-travel, and in visits to the past. That the framework itself may be used to carry a theme of greater philosophical significance, or that it may be used as part of some larger plot is here—as in other plots—an ever-present possibility, as evidenced in the recent Clifford D. Simak novel, "Time Quarry,"<sup>3</sup> which will be discussed in more detail under plots of creation.

1. "Shot in the Dark", ed. by Judith Merril, New York: Bantam, 1950, pp. 198-210.
2. *TOW*, pp. 295-314
3. *Galaxy Science Fiction* (hereafter referred to as *GSF*), Oct., Nov., Dec., 1950.

(Mr. Gunn continues his survey in our next issue)

Ordinarily, You'd Think We'd Plug One of the Stories  
and you'd be right, nine times out of ten — but this is  
the tenth time, the time when an article has already  
brought in such glowing praise, that we want to draw  
your attention to

## THE EVOLUTION OF SCIENCE FICTION

by Tom Claerson

*it's but one of the many topflight features in*

## SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

*August issue now on sale at all stands*



Somewhere, somehow, they'd bungled—or perhaps a bright child was too smart for them, whatever they did. The reason was no longer important; now, it was the fact that Johnny had found what they'd worked so hard to conceal from him—and Johnny was afraid...



## NIGHT- FEAR

by Frank Belknap Long

(illustrated by Don Sibley)



**I**N THE big house, upstairs, a child was sobbing. Dr. Brannon could hear the sobs from the foot of the stairs, and his nearsighted eyes grew troubled. It was more than he could understand.

Johnny wasn't a maladjusted youngster, starved for sympathy and affection; he was a perfectly normal seven-year-old, fond of games and well-liked by his playmates. A self-reliant, confident lad, even if he did have a way of smiling which made him seem wise beyond his years, at times.

Dr. Brannon tried hard to swallow

his fear as he climbed the stairs. For the first time in ten years he felt really old—weary and baffled and old. He found himself thinking of Johnny's pretty young mother, and how hard she had tried to spare her son the loneliness and dread which had cast a shadow on her own childhood.

*Even unto the third generation*, he thought, and for an instant bitterness tightened his lips and drove the gentleness from his eyes. Why should a child playing with other children in the warm, bright sunlight feel a sudden, terrifying sense of insecurity? What could have darkened the sunlight for him, and undermined his confidence in himself?

Dr. Brannon glanced nervously at

his watch. Try as he might, he could not rid his mind of the alarming, hour-old memory of a laughing, healthy child eclipsed by a white-faced stranger with tormented eyes and tear-stained cheeks.

Psychologists were always harping on the almost-miraculous sanity of childhood, its freedom from morbidity, its joyous acceptance of life as a shining, untarnished coin. How blind they were not to realize that children were at the mercy of night-fears—great, shadowy-winged creatures which could inflict cruel wounds, and go flapping off into the darkness, leaving their small, terrified victims in full flight from reality on a plane incomprehensible to adults.

It is always a trying moment when an elderly physician must win the confidence of a young patient by absolutely untried methods. Dr. Brannon could still hear himself asking: "What frightened you, Johnny? Did you talk it over with the other children? Is that why you're so frightened?"

He might as well have saved his breath. Johnny hadn't wanted sympathy of a wheezing, red-faced old fool of a doctor.

The door of Johnny's room was ajar. Dr. Brannon could hear Johnny's mother moving about and making a difficult situation worse by talking to her son as if he were still a tot of three with a stubborn streak, and a bad case of sulks.

With an impatient grimace, he stepped into the room, and shut the door quickly behind him. "Well, Johnny, how do you feel now?" he asked. "Don't you think we'd better have another little talk—man to man?"

Johnny's mother ceased rearranging the pillows at her son's back and straightened with a sigh that was half a sob, the bedside lamp casting a circle of radiance about her pale hair.

"I'm sure he'll talk to me now," Dr. Brannon said, conscious of a faint irritation with the woman for being so

beautiful seven years after the death of her husband. Somehow the mother of an ailing child who was not a little worn-looking grated obscurely on his sense of propriety.

In utter silence he drew up a chair, sat down and looked at the lad on the bed over the top of his spectacles. He saw Johnny's face as a misty oval, the eyes darkly shining.

He coughed and adjusted his glasses. Seeing Johnny's face clearly, he felt a curious helplessness which his reason could not justify. Surely Johnny wasn't beyond help; he wasn't physically ill, or running a fever. His mother had perhaps unwisely put him to bed, and pulled down the shades, leaving him for a full hour in deep darkness. Naturally he would be blinking now, and confused, and resentful. He couldn't possibly be as tormented as he looked, as inwardly beyond hope of rescue.

DR. BRANNON hitched his chair nearer to the bed, and the smile that came to his face was slow and friendly. "If you were away at school I could understand your not wanting to talk about it," he said. "Strangers might not know what a brave lad you really are. But *I know*, Johnny. Surely you can talk freely to an old friend in your own home!"

For an instant Johnny drew back as if in secret pain. Then, abruptly, he leaned forward, his eyes accusing, his hands tightly clenched. "This *isn't* my home!" he said, and his voice seemed no longer the voice of a child, but that of some aging wanderer, shaken by despair and wretchedness.

Dr. Brannon stared for a long moment into the bewildered, angry eyes in shocked disbelief. Then his lips tightened, and he said in a voice that was almost a whisper: "So you've found that out at last, lad!"

Johnny's mother straightened as if stung by a hornet. "How *could* he find

out?" she breathed. "None of the other children knew."

"How did you find out, Johnny?" Dr. Brannon asked.

Johnny shook his head, then looked away quickly.

"All right, Johnny," Dr. Brannon said, gently. "Keep it to yourself, if you wish."

He turned around to face Johnny's mother. "You can't keep secrets from some youngsters," he said. "You just can't, that's all. It's as great a folly as trying to hide a jam-pot on a high shelf. Most likely the other children knew just enough to enable him to put two and two together."

Dr. Brannon took his spectacles and blew upon them. "Children's minds are tricky. When a lad like Johnny puts two and two together he'll come up with a figure that cuts across all mathematical boundaries. Not four, mind you, but a figure that cuts much closer to the truth."

Johnny's mother sat down on the side of the bed, put her arm around him and kissed him. "Johnny—" she whispered.

Dr. Brannon's eyes had a glint that might have been compassion or amusement—or both. "Your mother's here, Johnny," he said. "Doesn't that make it your home?"

"No, it doesn't."

"You're afraid, lad—is that it? For the first time in your life, you feel lost and afraid and alone?"

There was a quick, answering look of torment in Johnny's eyes.

*Good lad, Dr. Brannon thought. Someday, Johnny, you'll answer all the well-meant questions fearlessly. It's the only way we can give and receive help in the loneliness and the darkness.*

Dr. Brannon pushed back his chair, and stood up. "I'm going to prove to you that you have a home, Johnny," he said. "There's something you've got to face, and we're going to face it together."

At the door he paused to speak to

Johnny's mother. "Get him ready," he said. "I'll be back in twenty minutes."

**W**HEN DR. BRANNON returned Johnny was ready. If Dr. Brannon had moved wearily before he now seemed to bear the weight of the world on his shoulders. "All right, lad," he said. "We may as well get going."

Dr. Brannon took Johnny by the hand, and together they descended the stairs of the big, silent house, moving slowly and awkwardly. Then out across a sun-drenched playroom they went, and down a long sloping corridor with shining walls.

Doors opened at their approach with an eerie droning, and closed noiselessly behind them. Five doors with winking lights, and then they were in another corridor which was almost a tunnel, and a cold wind seemed to blow in upon them.

At the end of the corridor they halted, and Dr. Brannon said: "You were born here, Johnny. For all the years of your life, this has been your home. A good home, Johnny, a home to be proud of. I was not born here, but the sunlight up above is as warm and bright as the sunlight I knew as a child."

"It's not real sunlight," Johnny said.

"No, of course not; but it's just as healthful. You see, lad, even now we who should be strong and self-reliant sometimes become frightened. We let ourselves become frightened, and it is very foolish."

Dr. Brannon pressed Johnny's hand. "We thought we could protect you from the cold and the dark—to keep you from feeling lost and afraid for the few happy years before eight. We of an old generation had a less-secure childhood."

Dr. Brannon scratched his ear. "I'm afraid we were not too successful; you were too smart for us. Youngsters really know how to cut corners to get at the truth, and when they do—" He

smiled. "There's a fine kettle of fish to unboil, lad!"

Dr. Brannon tightened his grip on Johnny's hand. "So now for the first time you'll see your home as it really is. I'll tell you how it became your home, and you'll be proud—you'll be so very proud of the men who gave their lives to make it your home—you'll forget to be afraid.

"Now remember what I told you. That spacesuit is heavy and weighs you down. But away from the station's artificial gravity, you'll be as spry as a harvest mouse in a field of summer corn."

Dr. Brannon pressed a button and there was a steady, humming sound.

Dr. Brannon said slowly: "Now put on your oxygen-helmet, lad. That's right; just let it settle gently on your shoulders, the way your father did when the Earth was forever behind him, and he walked from the rocket with the courage of a true pioneer."

For a moment Dr. Brannon seemed to grow in stature, as if the bracing of his shoulders had added a cubit to his height. Then the airlock swung open, and the man and the boy walked forward together, and emerged hand in hand on the cold, dark surface of the moon.



## The Lobby

(continued from page 8)

was already a favorite with the readers of *Weird Tales* before his first science-fiction magazine appearance—a short story entitled, "The Thought Materializer", in the Spring 1930 issue of *Science Wonder Quarterly*.

W. MACOLM WHITE, whose short-short story, "No Greater Glory"—in our last issue—has received many an appreciative chuckle.

LEONARD WAMPLER, who is our latest "first", and whom I hope to be able to point to, in years to come, as one of my "discoveries".

HAL ANNAS was initially presented by *Imagination*, with "The Ultimate Quest", in the December 1950 issue. The present story is his first for us, and I hope it won't be his last.

And finally, as this issue indicates, let me assure you that we haven't dropped the trimmed edges on *Dynamic*; due to uncertainty as to pre-

cisely how much space was required for the trim, type was placed too close to the right border of the August issue, and we found that the cover would either have to be done over, or the trim bypassed. It was too late to do the cover over. We all wore sackcloth and ashes for a week, let our beards grow, and frequently knocked our heads against the wall in grief and contrition. Between times, I tried to persuade myself that the Schomberg cover would not have been quite as effective with a bleed all around—type or no type—but such backsliding was the occasion for sterner penance. We implore your forgiveness, and vow it won't happen again—not accidentally, at least. I add that, because the question of whether the experiment will evolve into permanent policy depends upon your response to it.

[Turn To Page 69]



## INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

A Department For The Science Fictionist

by Robert A. Madle

### THE FANTASY VETERANS ASSOCIATION

*"There are no newstands in Korea!"*

THE ABOVE quotation is the fighting byline of the most philanthropic organization ever to be conceived by a group of science fiction enthusiasts—"The Fantasy Veterans Association," more familiarly known as the "Fan-Vets." This organization, composed entirely of veterans of the armed forces of the United States, is firmly dedicated to one principle: science fiction readers in service, regardless of where on this planet they may be, *must* and *will* continue to read their favorite brand of literature. And the "Fan-Vets" have satisfied the reading desires of innumerable overseas sfans, to the tune of several thousand magazines and books. How, one may wonder, did an organization of this type come to be?

Before World War II, James V. Taurasi and Raymond Van Houten were active science-fiction fans. They corresponded with scores of other fans, published fan-magazines, and helped form fan-clubs. They were among the top participants of the memorable fan-era of 1936-41 and—like many other fans—soon found themselves in the armed forces after December 7th, 1941. During the liberation of Le Havre, Taurasi and Van Houten met up with each other in a messhall; it was there that the idea of the "Fan-Vets" germinated.

Jimmy and Ray beefed to each other about not receiving science-fiction magazines from back home, although cookies, letters, and snapshots appeared to come in

droves. And, at the same time, they mulled over the idea of a fraternal club for sf veterans. However, nothing materialized until the outbreak of the Korean conflict. The organization, although originally conceived as a fraternal group, immediately changed to a service organization, with its primary activity being to supply science-fiction reading material to those service men and women interested in receiving it. The idea caught on immediately, and such editors as John W. Campbell and Robert W. Lowndes helped publicize the organization in the readers' departments of their publications.

Donations of magazines, books, and cash were sent to the "Fan-Vets" by readers in sympathy with its purpose. Also, fans in the service read of the organization and applied for membership. At the present time the "Fan-Vets" has well over 100 members on its roster, the majority of them overseas. The club's officers feel that membership will increase sharply, as more and more fans are hearing of the organization.

Many prominent members of the science fiction field belong to the "Fan-Vets": Sam Moskowitz, David H. Keller, H. L. Gold, Forrest J. Ackerman, F. Orlin Tremaine (former editor of *Astounding*), David A. Kyle, John Victor Peterson, W. Lawrence Hamling, L. Sprague de Camp, and many more. Any reader of science fiction who has spent at least three months in any branch of the armed forces is cordially invited to join up with the gang. Merely drop a postcard to Secretary James V. Taurasi, 137-03 32nd Avenue, Flushing 54, New York. By return mail you will receive your application blank. Note: *there are no dues*. Other current officers are: Raymond Van



Houten, Commander; George Nims Raybin, Legal Advisor; Robert A. Adeler, Special Services Officer; and, Lester G. Mayer, Korean Representative.

Other activities of the "Fan-Vets" include the publication of a periodic news sheet, *The Fan-Vet*, distributed free to all members and interested parties; a free agenting service for members who think they can write or draw; and the sponsoring of an annual science fiction conference. The boys held a bang-up affair in New York City, last April 19th, which was attended by over 200 fans, authors, and editors. Just about every important science fiction name on the east coast was present, plus the surprise appearance of English writer and astronautics expert, Arthur C. Clarke. Hundreds of books, magazines, and original illustrations were sold at a giant auction, the proceeds of which are to be used, of course, to send science fiction overseas to the boys and girls in service. Already the officers have announced their next conference; future issues of *The Fan-Vet* will carry all details.

As stated above, James V. Taurasi will accept all applications for membership, also any donations of cash, or inquiries of any nature. Commander Ray Van Houten, 26 Twentieth Avenue, Paterson 3, New Jersey, will thankfully receive all donations of science fiction books and magazines. Don't throw your magazines away after reading them! Remember: "There are no news-stands in Korea!"

## SCIENCE FICTION SPOTLIGHT

**L** SPRAGUE de CAMP has uncovered several more unpublished Robert E. Howard stories and, with some sprucing up, will make nice Conan adventures. Sprague informs us that he is also hard at work on a long article on mythology for Bob Lowndes and, with Fletcher Pratt, is finishing up another Harold Shea adventure.... Charles Dye, among the better of the new crop of writers, does children's stories for *Piggly Wiggly* magazine.... G. Gordon Dewey's "The Tooth" was picked for the Bleiler-Dikty anthology for this year, but a previous commitment prevented its appearing.... Mel Hunter, sfan and new cover artist, has designed the cover and interior artwork for the Program Booklet of the 6th Annual Westercon.

*From the World of Books:* August W. Derleth is now working up an anthology featuring the "new voices" of science fiction. "Morning Stars" will contain stories by Ed Ludwig, Frank Quattrocchi, James Causey, Chad Oliver, Robert Donald Locke, and other new stars.... E. Everett Evans' Fantasy Press volume, "Man of Many Minds," is being considered for radio and video adaptation. Evans is now working on the second novel in the series, "Man of Many Bodies".... S. Fowler Wright will

have a new novel published by Abelard, "Spider's War." He has also just completed "Space in Reverse." December Abelard releases will be Charles Dye's "The Stars Spell Death" and GOSmith's "Hell Flower".... L. Sprague de Camp's "Science Fiction Handbook" will be an August Hermitage House release.... Among the new pocketbooks are "The Space Merchants" ("Gravy Planet") by Pohl and Kornbluth at 35c, a Ballantine book; a 25c Pocket Book version of Wells' "The War of the Worlds"; and a 35c Bantam Giant version of John Collier's "Fancies and Goodnights."

*The Scientifilms:* Dick Williams, popular LA newspaper columnist, has sold an original s-f idea to the movies, "Space Fortress." Williams recently devoted his column to Forrest J. Ackerman when the latter went to great lengths to unsneak a sneak preview of Ray Bradbury's three dimensional thriller, "It Came from Outer Space".... Ray Harryhausen, fan who has seen "King Kong" 37 times, is the animator of Bradbury's "Beast from 20,000 Fathoms".... A large number of members of the LASFS went in a body to the midnite "premathon" (24-hour, round-the-clock premiere) of "House of Wax." Bela Lugosi was there replete with Dracula cape, and Mae Clarke repeated over the mike the shriek she had made famous twenty years ago when Frankenstein was produced. The Director of the LASFS was also interviewed on the radio.... Going the rounds now are "Invaders from Mars" and "The Magnetic Monster," both class B quickies—but both well worth viewing.

*11th World Science Fiction Convention:* The sudden death of Chairman James A. Williams was a terrible blow to the Convention Committee, and to fandom in general. New Chairman Milt Rothman comes experienced as he was also Chairman of the 1947 "Philcon." Alan E. Nourse is new Publicity Chairman and Will Jenkins is taking over the *Progress Report* with the third issue, just out.... Special awards will be presented to the outstanding personages in the science fiction field. "Hugos" will be handed out to the author of the year's best novel, the leading fan personality, the editor of the best magazine (professional and fan), et cetera. These presentations will be one of the highlights of the Convention.... Special interplanetary-scene stamps commemorating the convention are available from the Committee at \$1 per set.... Forry Ackerman tells us that, although it is just a little too early to give definite assurance, as the deal is just being brought to the contract-signing stage, he believes he can influence the producer to consider premiering a brand new scientifilm at the Convention. The film will be based on Paul W. Fairman's "Deadly City".... This is your last chance to get your membership dollar in to the Committee. Send it immediately to Box 2019, Philadelphia 3, Pa.

*The Fanzines:* We certainly appreciate the large number of fanzines we have received lately. While we intended to discuss some of them this time, we find that we shall be unable to do so because of space limitations. We must, however, recommend the third *Fantastic Worlds* (30c from 1449 Brockton Avenue, Los Angeles 25, California) because of the excellent article by Philip J. Farmer; the seventh *Vega* (10c from 119 S. Front Street, Marquette, Michigan) because of its intangible fan atmosphere; the twelfth issue of *STF Trends* (25c from Box 184, Napoleon, Ohio) because of its attractive format; and, most of all, the fourth *Journal of Science Fiction* (50c from 1331 W. Newport Avenue, Chicago 13, Illinois) because it is the best fan magazine we have ever seen. It contains eighty photo-offset pages including a complete magazine index for 1952! Keep sending them to: 1366 East Columbia Avenue, Philadelphia 25, Pa.

## TWENTY YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION

AS WE HAVE indicated, science fiction in mid-1933 apparently paralleled the economic depression, in that it appeared to have hit rock-bottom at this time. Connoisseurs of the genre were duly concerned, and top fan Allen Glasser appeared in *Author and Journalist* with "The Wane of Science Fiction." The following quote from *Science Fiction Digest* illustrates the general feeling of dismay prevalent at this time:

With both *Amazing* and *Wonder* skipping a month, the discontinuing of *Wonder Quarterly*, and *Amazing Quarterly* long overdue, it looks as if we have reached the bottom of the science fiction depression. If any more calamities happen, there won't be any stfield to speak about. Then what? We hope the depth stf has reached really is absolute bottom.

And the first indication that science fiction was on its way up was the almost unheralded reappearance of *Astounding Stories*. It may be remembered that *Astounding Stories of Super Science* along with the entire Clayton organization, collapsed early in 1933, the final issue was dated March. The new *Astounding* was published by Street & Smith, dated October 1933, and was, apparently, a cross between the old *Astounding* and its sister magazine, *Strange Tales*. Readers of the era observed the revived magazine with some misgivings: they were elated that *Astounding* had returned, but, at the same time, they were disappointed with the content and physical makeup of the new magazine. Little did anyone at the time realize that, in just a few months, *Astounding Stories* was

to lead science fiction to heights hitherto unrealized. The revival of *Astounding* was, without a doubt, one of the really great events in the history of magazine science fiction.

The new magazine contained 144 small (pulp-size) pages; the cover was by Howard V. Browne, although uncredited. The interior illustrations were by various Street & Smith staff artists such as Amos Sewell, one "C.D.", and—although we can't prove it—Frank Orban. Gone were the Wesso covers, and the interiors of Marchioni, Paul, and Wesso. In format, there was nothing to distinguish the new magazine from any one of the general run of Street & Smith pulps.

There were eleven stories in the issue, only three of which were science fiction. The others were either weird tales, or just slightly-unusual adventure stories. The cover advertized "The Orange God" by Walter Glamis (Nat Schachner) but really portrayed a scene from Peter Gordon's unastounding "Anything Can Happen." "The Orange God" itself was an apparent left-over from *Strange Tales*. The pure science fiction stories were "A Race Through Time" by Donald Wandrei (the only reasonably good story in the issue); "The Coffin Ship" by Anthony Gilmore (Harry Bates and Desmond Hall); and "Fire Imps of Vesuvius" by Nat Schachner. The remaining stories, with the exception of a short horror-story by Paul Ernst, and an anecdote by Col. P. H. Fawcett, were by writers never heard from again. This was a strange and uninspiring issue, indeed; it didn't give even an inkling of the fact that, in several months, the revived magazine would become the unchallenged leader in the field.

*Wonder Stories* again skipped an issue—this one being dated September-October. Frank R. Paul's cover illustrated Frank K. Kelly's realistic description of early attempts at lunar colonization, "The Moon Tragedy." Edward H. Hinton appeared with his first (and only) story, "Monsters of Callisto," a long, over-written story, not even vaguely remembered today. "Spheres of Hell," by John Beynon Harris, was a clever little story of a biological invasion of England by a mythical Eastern nation. Henry E. Lema's "The Last of the Swarm" was a so-so short, which depicted a giant mosquito threat and how it was averted. The French importation, "The Radio Terror," was finally concluded, much to the relief of most readers. This was a mediocre issue of *Wonder*. Monthly publication was announced beginning with the November issue. Paul illustrated all stories.

The October *Amazing* appeared in small pulp-size, 144 pages. The cover was by Leo Morey, illustrating Stanton A. Coblentz' blast against war, "The Men Without Shadows." Robert Arthur made his initial appearance in *Amazing* with a neat little time-travel tale, "The Theft of the Wash-

ington Monument." Part one of J. Lewis Burt's "When the Universe Shrank" appeared—a super-galactic interplanetary yarn in the then-popular Smith-Campbell tradition. Probably the best story in the issue was David H. Keller's "The Tree Terror." This was a typical "Kelleryarn"—a tale of a biological experiment out of control and man's imminent doom. But, as in most Keller stories, man ultimately triumphs over his mistake. "Triplanetary" by E. E. Smith was announced as forthcoming, and readers could readily note that science fiction was on the upgrade.

We mentioned in a previous column that *Science Fiction Digest* was the only fan publication of the period. Charles D. Hornig made that "two" when the first issue of *The Fantasy Fan* was published in September, 1933. It contained 12 printed pages, slightly larger than the digest-size magazines of today. Hornig maintained that TFF would appeal primarily to the reader of weird fiction, but would contain a sufficient amount of material of a science fictional nature to interest that group, also. Material was featured by Julius Schwartz, Forrest J. Ackerman, Bob Tucker, Mort Weisinger, and Allen Glasser. The October number increased its number of pages to twenty, and featured "The Kingdom of the Worm" by C. A. Smith.

The first installment of "Supernatural Horror in Literature" by H. P. Lovecraft was printed, along with material by Glasser, Ackerman, et cetera. Charles D. Hornig created quite an impression on the fan world with his new publication. Furthermore, this magazine was to be the motivating force behind one of the strangest occurrences in the annals of science fiction.

With the September issue, *Science Fiction Digest* also adopted the smaller format. Chapters three and four of "Cosmos" were featured, by Author J. Burks and Bob Olsen, respectively. (The first two chapters of this super-galactic novel were by Ralph Milne Farley and David H. Keller.) "Cosmos" was to contain seventeen chapters, each one written by a great science fiction writer. Other interesting items were an autobiography of L. A. Eshbach; an interview with Philip Wylie; the regular news columns by Schwartz and R. A. Palmer; and chapter four of Nihil's devastating satire, "Alicia in Blunderland." The October issue featured the usual departments, plus chapter five of "Cosmos," by Francis Flagg.

That is all until next issue—when, among other things, we will discuss the ushering-in of the incredible "thought-variant" era of science fiction.



Looking at these decadent beings of Earth, Matuska saw the future of his own people, the end to which they, too must come. But must it be thus?



Look for the  
September

Here's An Unusual Novelet

## DUST THOU ART . . .

by Kris Neville

and, in addition, you'll  
find such topnotch stories  
as

## TO SAVE A WORLD

by Irving E. Cox, Jr.

## STAND WATCH IN THE SKY

by Algis Budrys

FUTURE

SCIENCE  
FICTION

A Dynamic "First"  
by Leonard Wampler

# MACHINE COMPLEX

Sometimes a youngster's reading-matter really requires  
careful supervision . . .

*King: How do you, pretty lady?*

*Ophelia: Well! they say the owl was  
a baker's daughter. We know what we  
are, but we know not what we may be.*

*HAMLET: Act IV, sc. v.*

**T**ODAY THE Repairman came  
to see me again.

He *really* is a doctor, but I  
like to call him the Repairman, it  
irritates him so much.

He says it makes him think of a  
mechanic or some other kind of technician  
who repairs *inanimate* things. And he says,  
"Damn it all, boy, I'm a physician, a doctor of human beings,  
not a garageman!"

Of course he knows I'm only joking,  
but that doesn't keep him from  
glowering at me and muttering to himself  
all the time he's in my room.

This morning he had me strip down  
to my chassis and gave all my parts  
a complete going over. When he finished  
he said I'm alright again, and I  
can go out and run, tomorrow. I told  
him I was glad to hear that because  
my wheels are getting a little rusty,  
being on the blocks as long as I have  
been. He frowned and muttered some  
more about the dubious by-products of  
the machine age. I rolled into high  
gear.

"Don't race your motor, Repair-  
man!"

He snapped his tool kit shut and  
left in a huff. I went out on the land-

ing where I could hear him talking to  
my mother, downstairs.

"It isn't normal!" he was protesting.  
"The boy is headed for something  
of a disaster unless you do something  
to prevent it. This business of living,  
thinking as a machine instead of a  
person is leading him straight toward  
a breakdown. When and if it hits him,  
I'll have to recommend a complete  
psychological overhaul!"

I could hardly keep still. Isn't it a  
laugh, though? In order to describe the  
treatment of what he calls my machine  
complex, he had to resort to a mechanical  
term. Overhaul, ha!

After awhile—I didn't listen any  
longer, it was all so stupid—he left,  
and I came downstairs. I wandered  
around a few minutes, just looking out  
the windows and planning what I'd do  
when I go outside tomorrow, and I  
guess I must have got in Mother's  
way. She pushed me into the library.

"Amuse yourself in here for an hour  
or so," she told me. "I've got to get  
things ready for your father's dinner."

I didn't mind. I like to read, occasionally. It passes the time.

I skipped over the books on the  
lower shelves. They were just the usual  
things, anyway, and didn't look very  
interesting. I finally selected a couple  
of old ones from Father's collection  
that he keeps on the shelf nearest the  
ceiling. They were really ancient. I  
had to handle them carefully to keep  
them from crumbling to pieces.

I flipped through the first one. No pictures. I laid it to one side. Reading without pictures can be so tedious.

The other one was much better.

I was chuckling over it when Mother went by the door.

I stopped her and asked her to come in. "Look at these!" I said. "Did you ever see such funny pictures in all your life?"



SHE TOOK one look at what I was reading and stopped in her tracks. "Where did you get that?" she demanded.

She was flushing. Positively flushing. I had never seen her so excited before.

I showed her where I got the book.

"Your father!" she exclaimed. "I'm having a talk with him tonight—you see if I don't!!"

"With Father?" I asked. "What about?"

"Never mind! Just never you mind!"

I couldn't see what the fuss was about. It was only a book.

The drawings in it were strange, sure, but there was nothing indecent about them. Maybe funny, and a little freakish, but not indecent. Certainly nothing to call a family conference about.

Anyway, she commanded me to give her the book, so I did. I switched over to one called "Jon Dare's Trip To The Moon". It was dull, but at least I got to read it all the way through without causing Mother to strip her gears

again. Once a day is enough for that kind of thing.

I wondered from time to time what would happen when Father came in.

Nothing did. At least not until after we'd assembled in the dining room and filled our fuel tanks. Then Mother took Father into the library. I wanted to come in, too, but she told me to go to my room.

I WENT ONLY as far as the hall, and stopped to listen.

"Chalmers!" she said to him, "look at this!"

Though I couldn't see, I knew she must be holding out the book she had taken from me.

"What about it?"

"What about it? Our son was reading it today, *that's* what about it! I told you when you brought it home he'd get it sooner or later, but you wouldn't listen! Bringing in such, such incredible *trash* for a young mind to absorb. I said at the time..."

"And I told you time after time since then that I can't see what harm it can do the boy. There are things in there that he's bound to discover someday, and he may as well get them straight from the beginning! It's all a part of his growing up, and I still can't see what possible harm—"

"You can't?" my mother interrupted. "Well I can!! He's young. Sensitive. And he's already headed for a... a... machine complex! Ask the doctor; he was here just today. Our son doesn't even think of himself as a human being! This fantastic drivel could easily drive him the rest of the way, if he took it in! It could make a complete neurotic of him! That's what harm it could do!"

I peeked around the door. Neither of my parents noticed me. They were completely engrossed in the book my father held.

"Look at it! Why do you suppose the publishers were ever permitted to



print such a hopelessly incorrect text as that?"

Mother pointed at a page in the book. "Full of misconceptions!" she snorted. "Not a single correct figure. Not one digit as it should be!"

"The boy is fairly intelligent," said my father, and I *glowed*. "I think he'll understand that this isn't factual information if I explain it to him."

Mother was losing control of herself. "Explain, explain, explain!" she retorted. "I'm going to do something about it!"

"Allis! Have you gone completely off the track? What are you *doing*?"

"I'm destroying your precious ancient manuscript, that's what I'm doing! If you won't protect your child's mind, it's up to me!"

She had uncoiled her middle feeler and snatched the book from my father's tri-digital hands. She was so excited I could hear her intakes clicking.

She ran the book through her shredding mechanism.

"*Textbook of Human Anatomy*, '51 edition, indeed!" she whirled.



## READIN' and WRITHIN'

(continued from  
page 32)

"King Conan", which sells for \$3.00, also contains two short novels: "Beyond the Black River" (from *Weird Tales*, May, June 1935) and "The Treasure of Trancos" (completed and edited by L. Sprague de Camp, first magazine appearance in the first issue of *Fantasy Fiction*, March 1953. Three short stories: "Jewels of Gwahlur" (from *Weird Tales*, March 1935); "The Phoenix on the Sword" (*Weird Tales*, December, 1932); and "The Scarlet Citadel" (from *Weird Tales*, January 1933) round out the volume. I would say that all the tales in the first volume are top-notch Conan, while only the latter two in this volume are first-class. But I wouldn't urge you to bypass either volume, if you're under the Howard spell—as I'll admit I am!

Those of you who own Isaac Asimov's "Foundation"—either from my recommendation, someone else's, or because you knew what you wanted in the first place—need only be notified that the second volume, "Foundation and Empire" is a "must". I'm not sure that it's a good starting-place, however, for those who have not read the first book, and suggest to latecomers that they get both, and read 'em in order. You will then want to round out your set with the third volume, "Second Foundation", which concludes the series, so far as Asimov's reworking of the magazine series goes. These two books are \$2.75 each, and my opinion on the first book, "Foundation" (Gnome Press, \$2.75) in the March 1952 issue of *Future Science Fiction*, will stand for the entire series. In other words: excellent.

There are rumors that Asimov has another novel in this series, and I hope they are not just idle rumors. RWL

W. Malcolm White

*without once taking his tongue out of his cheek, here relates  
the fascinating instance of*

## THE POETESS and the 21 GREY-HAIRED CADAVERS

*(illustrated  
by Paul  
Orban)*



...A man stepped into the hall from the unknown room beyond, stopped before them, and nodded slightly.

**M**ARIJANE BRAZENOSE was a delicate soul, as befits a young lady poet. She was subject to drafts, bruised easily, and suffered sniffles at appropriate times and seasons. If there is a heroine to this tale, it ought not to be she, for the credit must go to Mother Nature. Nevertheless, this is the tale of Marijane's experience with the Cannery World.

They called it the Cannery World afterwards of course; the name fitted. Imagine if you can; a world of one huge metal city, a city sprawled over continents and oceans—a world-sized city without parks or squares; simply

hundreds of stories high, and dozens of stories deep beneath the ground; million-cubicle blocks of houses divided from each other only by mile-deep narrow metal canyons; lit eternally by artificial blue lights.

Imagine every room in every building housing at least one family. Imagine no room differing from any other room; no pictures on walls; no furniture save for sleeping-mats; and no cooking utensils. Imagine eating only the one food—the universal cereal-nutrient mush. Imagine everything metal, everything greyish.

That is the Cannery World. A planet-wide mass of canned humanity, a world corresponding exactly to the planet Earth, whose space it occupies. For the Cannery World is a vibrational twin to this Earth of ours—possibly one of many—separated by a gulf of vibrational and supra-atomic strictures, entirely comprehensible to scientists, and students of the occult, but baffling to the uninitiate.

Marijane Brazenose had no more suspicion of the Cannery World's dull existence than anyone else in the world had at the time she accepted her friend and patron's invitation to a summer weekend at his estate. For you see, Marijane Brazenose was also a very pretty and desirable young lady of twenty-two, whose three slender volumes of delicate verse had been "sponsored" financially by young Edward Fitzhugh—in the hope she would get the poetry out of her system long enough to say "yes" to his pleas. The Fitzhugh family were rolling in the long green, and Edward could afford to indulge a pretty young thing's fancies.

So Marijane rode out to the Fitzhugh estate on an air-conditioned train; was driven to the sprawling country home set in the middle of the wide Fitzhugh greenery; and ensconced herself for the weekend in the luxurious manor house, so con-

veniently air-conditioned for her special benefit.

Marijane did not like to travel in August. She preferred her penthouse in Greenwich Village, but she had promised Edward one last visit before she immured herself until October.

There were no other guests that weekend, and the servants were carefully trained to keep themselves out from under foot. Marijane and Edward could sit in the wide, glassed-in conservatory and gaze out towards the acres of flowers and shrubs, while giving out the ecstatic sighs of youth and love. They could also have enjoyed the powerful Fitzhugh television-sets and radio-cabinets, except that something was wrong. Every time they turned one on, they got simply awful static, weird snow, and ghastly blurs. There was an electrical demon loose in the house, as Marijane put it; nothing was working right. Big static sparks leapt up from the imported rugs and hit Marijane's hand when she touched the furniture.

It was all most upsetting, and Edward promised to call in some men to check the house-wiring. Fortunately the air-conditioning was not affected.

**THE TROUBLE** with Cannery World started shortly after lunch, that Saturday. They were walking along the main hall on their way to the library, when Marijane noticed a strangely-discolored spot on the wall, right on the rich panelling. She stopped, pointed, "Why, look—it's all blue!"

Edward looked, and indeed she was right: There was a round bluish circle on the wall, right on the polished wood. As they stared at it, they both gasped, for the spot was growing before their very eyes.

"It looks like a blue spotlight against the wall, rather than a stain," said Edward peering closely.

"Oh, dear," Marijane grabbed his arm. "Don't get too close."

She was right; clearly, it was growing brighter and wider, and getting a bit crackly as well. It seemed to flicker slightly as it spread outwards over the wall. There was a scent of ozone in the air. Then, before either of them could jump, the spot flared out into a brilliant blinding blue; there was a sharp explosion; and...the light was gone. There was a hole in the wall where it had been.

The hole was perfectly circular and large, about seven feet in diameter. Through it, they could see into a room, with bare metal walls and a bare metal floor. They stared, and as they stared, there were footsteps; a man stepped into the hall from the unknown room beyond, stopped before them, and nodded slightly. "Welcome," he said in a flat monotone, "to Sector Seven, Quadrant Sixteen, Level Nine, Extended."

They stared at him, while he glanced around the hall. He was pale, with a translucently-whitish skin. His eyes were a yellowing gray; his thin hair was gray; his features were sharp; his lips thin and colorless; his chin pointed. His clothing consisted of a single-piece coverall, grey-blue in tone. The only decoration was a small line of ideographic markings across his chest, presumably indicating a name. He carried a metal box in his hands, propped like a weapon.

"My name is Lekto cal-Magima tul-Anamagar cum-Lektor. I have been directed to assist your assimilation."

"What are you doing in my house?" said Edward regaining his tongue. "What do you mean by cutting holes in my wall, and where did that room come from?"

Edward was an assertive young man; as heir to the Fitzhugh fortunes, he never felt that he had to take lip from characters like the one before him.

However, Lekto did not change expression. "You are to come with me. I will direct you until we start our

emergence preparations." He pointed his little box at Edward and Marijane, and ennui seemed to fill their bones. They felt unable to disagree with him; they followed him meekly through the hole into the metal room.

**D**URING THE next twenty-four hours, they learned about the Cannery World and its relationship to ours. They ate the One Food, found it edible but thoroughly dull. They learned that it was made in universal factories, that it was all-complete—nothing else in the way of nourishment being required. They learned that on all this earth—which had once been quite similar to ours—there was not a green thing growing—not an animal, fish, or bird; that it harbored something over a trillion people, who had reached the limits of their artificial world. They also learned that the Central Manager of this particular Sector and Quadrant and Level had worked out the principle of breaking down the barriers between the two worlds and was "extending" his sector (unknown to his managerial colleagues) to cover our world. This was their initial break-through.

By the next day, a file of twenty men joined the couple in the room by the entry-hole. These were the men who were to set up the device outside the Fitzhugh house that would permit unlimited immigration. They differed from Lekto in no fashion whatsoever. Grey hair, similar eyes, features, pallidness gave Marijane the shuddery feeling that it would soon be a horribly colorless and dull world to live in, when several billion of these characters had come through.

She was thoroughly depressed by the thought. For a young lady poet, truly this was to be an unpoetical future. She gazed out of the one square window into the deep blue-lit canyon of a street, faced with tens of thousands of the same unshaded and unopenable windows, upwards, downwards, in all directions as far as the eye could see.

Not a flower in bloom in this whole wide world, she thought.

Edward walked up and down the small metal room, glancing anxiously every now and then into the section of his home visible through the circular gap. Two greytopped guards were watching it. Once in a while, he would see one of the twenty patrolling the corridors of his home. Evidently the Cannery men had not shown their heads outside yet, and were playing it very cautiously.

Marijane was very upset over her visions of futurity. She kept repeating to Edward her distress. "The flowers, the birds, the great wonderful trees ...all doomed! Oh, how could we live in a world like this, this cannery!"

They caught snatches of sleep on dun-colored floor-mats. At long last, Lekto announced that the time had come for their return—to guide the squad that would set up the permanent interworld door.

Followed by the twenty men carrying pieces of machinery, strange boxes, coils of wire and tools, the two—preceded by Lekto—marched again through the entryway. Lekto turned when they were all through, pressed a button on one of the boxes, and there was another terrific flash of blue light. When their eyes cleared, the hall in the Fitzhugh mansion was complete again. There was no trace of any hole. But there were twenty-one strange grey-haired pallid men to prove that their weird experience had happened.

Lekto herded Marijane and Edward through the air-conditioned rooms, the men following. They reached the main doorway. Lekto opened it and all of them trooped out onto the green and flowering lawn.

IT WAS AUGUST, and the heat of the summer beat down on them suddenly. The air was filled with the warmth and buzzing of insects and

the smells of the growing plant world.

Lekto and his men seemed disconcerted. Their own Cannery World was as unchangingly air-conditioned as the luxurious Fitzhugh mansion. It had probably never occurred to them that the world outside might not be similar. They exchanged uneasy glances at each other, and started slowly on across the lawn.

Marijane felt her eyes watering. "Oh dear," she said, "I've got it now. I—I'm going to sneeze!" She did so, violently, and again. Her eyes watered and her nose began to run. Edward whipped out a handkerchief. "Ugh, it's my hay fever. This must be the day it starts. *Ahh shchew!* I was afraid of this!"

Suddenly Marijane looked up from the handkerchief in astonishment, forgetting her own discomfort for a moment. "Why," she exclaimed, "look! Look at them! They have it worse!"

And so it was. The twenty-one men from the artificial metal-cited world were smitten mightily. As one, they were rolling about on the lawn, choking, gasping, scratching, turning blue and rashy. As Marijane held the linen to her nose, she and Edward watched in amazement.

Within a matter of minutes, the helpless men were all unconscious. Within a few minutes more—by the time that Edward had made up his mind to touch one—the twenty-one grey-haired men were dead from strangulation.

Bred for countless generations in a world totally free of pollen, and the myriad-myrriad microscopic life of our teeming vegetable world, the men from the Cannery Land were totally susceptible to all the allergies of the air. They had died, one and all, simply of acute hay fever—just as would any who tried to follow them.

THAT, IN brief, is the story of our world's one great invasion from a parallel sphere. Marijane is still



writing poetry about the beauty of the flowers and trees, even though she herself cannot stand them, personally, without suffering tears and sniffles. She is fairly sure now that she will marry Edward, for how else could she be certain of always having air-conditioning during August and September, the hay-fever months?

As for Edward, he can surely afford to sponsor more volumes of her verse, because the Fitzhugh fortune is going to be augmented several times

over by the discoveries his father's engineers are making on Lekto's abandoned machinery.

As for the twenty-one grey-haired cadavers, they are buried in a corner of the Fitzhugh estate, with a charming sonnet, signed by Marijane Brazenose, carved in granite above their communal grave.

I hate hay fever season myself, don't you?



## The Lobby

### Letters

#### COMPLETE WITH PERSONALITY

by R. R. Anger

Dear Mr. Lowndes: *Dynamic Science Fiction* has already developed its own "personality" and it's one that I greatly enjoy meeting every two months. For one thing, I can say flatly that you have given it the best non-fiction departments and articles to be found in any sf mag of today, or of any time in the past. Taking the June '53 issue as an example, we have "The Lobby"—a letter department which stacks up with the best in the field. With regard to the controversy over long letters, it seems to me that short letters are generally pretty dull and, although you could print more of them, the column would become less interesting, except to those whose letters were printed. In a long letter, the writer has a chance to develop his alleged thoughts and to be interesting. Of course, you have the responsibility of dumping those which are long and dull. In any case, I certainly enjoy the length of "The Lobby".

For "Remembered Words": my vote 1. James Blish, because his advice was well worth taking (you seem to have followed it already in the reviews of this issue's authors); 2. Rory Faulkner; 3. Edward F. Lacey III. The editorial and run-downs (run-down?) on the authors were fine. I especially liked the references to each author's first story.

Continuing down the contents page we come to "Readin' and Writin'". I certainly approve of long reviews of one or two books, rather than snap judgments of half a dozen; but really, you and the

(Continued From  
Page 57)

Daemon committed a horrible example of the sin Blish mentioned—giving away plots! Review, don't summarize.

L. Sprague de Camp had another of his fascinating spiritualistic articles in "A Modern Merlin". His tone is hostile, and his method extremely effective. One could argue endlessly about the nature of objective versus subjective reality; but when he reveals the details of how the various cults began, their leaders' private lives, etc., one has to admit that he has made his point. The *ad hominem* argument may be unfair, but in his hands it is devastating.

James Gunn's "The Philosophy of Science Fiction" is a masterly handling of this subject and is absolutely fascinating reading. I would say that his viewpoint is too much influenced by recent science fiction, and that part of the older material which has been reprinted recently; but the conclusions he draws are not harmed by this. By all means continue this series. It is something that marks *Dynamic* out from its competitors as showing great originality in articles.

"Inside Science Fiction", by Robert A. Madle is equally outstanding—especially the "Twenty Years Ago in Science Fiction" section. I have a suggestion though; "Other stories were 'Celestial Pioneers', a tale of colonization of Mars..." means nothing to the reader like myself, who has never read the story. The author's name should be mentioned with each story, so that we might connect it with the author's other work; titles means nothing in themselves.

I would like to finish by getting into the cover controversy. Luros' cover, this time, is very striking and original in conception. I noticed it at once on the stand, and liked it immediately. The fact that it did not illustrate a story was immaterial. I would say: use this type of cover (not relating to inner contents) alternately with James Blish's suggestion to give the artist a story

(turn to page 83)

# "SKYLARK" SMITH:

## An Appreciation

by Anthony K. Van Riper



IN THE WHOLE compass of science-fiction there are few men more controversial than Edward E. Smith, PhD. Thousands have called him "genius"; and other thousands have called him "hack".

But no matter what one's opinions concerning him, few will deny that E. E. Smith has been one of the greatest influences upon the entire field. He, with a select other few, may be pointed out by the critic as one who changed the entire pattern and conception of science-fiction.

He began his galactic career by writing space-opera; and when he wrote thirty at the bottom of "Children of the Lens", he was still writing space-opera. To all intents and purposes this is the main bone of contention concerning "Skylark" Smith.

It is now the fashion, among the *avant-garde* and the intellectuals of the science-fiction genre, to decry "space-opera" as trash, worthy of inclusion only in magazines featuring

half-dressed females and leering BEMs on the cover...hardly worthy of even the name of science-fiction. This is certainly not so.

Granted that there has been—and is—a very high trash-content among the specimens of the space-opera story, there are also a good many items under the classification of "space-opera" that can be listed among the top science-fiction stories of all time.

Smith wrote space-opera. But let us list some of his contemporaries:

John W. Campbell, Jr., author of such space-opera as "The Mightiest Machine" and "The Incredible Planet".

Jack Williamson, author of "The Legion of Space", "One Against The Legion", and "The Legion of Time".

Edmond Hamilton, author of "The Star Kings".

George O. Smith, author of "Pattern for Conquest".

Malcolm Jameson, author of "Bulldog of the Space Patrol".

A. E. Van Vogt, author of "Black Destroyer".

This, I maintain, is distinguished company, and I assert that E. E. Smith is worthy of inclusion in the ranks—

if not in forefront—of the group. I believe that the above list also answers the next question: Does the writing of space-opera automatically relegate the author to the “hack” classification?

Certainly not... I doubt that the appellation of “hack” could be applied to any of the authors named above.

Then why is E. E. Smith called hack? Obviously because of the quality of his writing, rather than the mere fact of his writing space-opera. Here we have more justification. Groff Conklin, in a recent review of an E. E. Smith novel (*Galaxy Science Fiction*, March, 1952, p. 84), wrote that he felt Smith's dialogue and description were atrocious. In part he was correct.

**T**HE FACT of the matter is that Smith was, and is, a spotty writer. His style meandered between that of H. P. Lovecraft and that of H. G. Wells, with Horatio Alger, on occasion, dragged protestingly on the scene. The modern reader has become used to shorter sentences, containing shorter words, embodied in shorter paragraphs. This, with the occasional exception of Ray Bradbury, is the style in general use today; in contrast, E. E. Smith's halfway-pedantic style reads like a period-piece, an unquestioned drawback.

On the other hand, Dr. Smith will occasionally come up with a gem of prose, such as the description of the fighting of the gladiators in “Triplane-tary”, part I, chapter 3. Another prime example is Conway Costigan's escape from the uranium mine in “First Lensman”, a piece of narration that reaches out, snatches the reader, and holds him with a tight grip until the action is over. Still a third example might be the pursuit of the Fenachrone in “Skylark Three”, or the capture of the Fenachrone ship in “Skylark of

Valeron”. There are, of course, moments when the some readers would just as soon—and more readers would rather—turn a few pages to get back to the action; this brings us to what I believe is Dr. Smith's greatest fault.

It is a shame that all of his protagonists were not deaf-mutes, for the dialogue he puts into their mouths is atrocious, nine times out of ten. As a general rule, his Terran heroes speak as if they were an old-fashioned, wind-up phonograph, over-wound: stilted phraseology is common, as are words and phrases never heard in social intercourse, and not likely to be heard in the future. For instance: “You're a blinding flash and a deafening report, Dotty Dimple, and I love you...”

At that point Richard Seaton, after just pulling their ship out of the maw of a dark star, is telling his wife that he loves her. Here, in my estimation, E. E. Smith reached his nadir—equalled, fortunately, only by some of the conversation between Kimbal Kinnison and Clarissa MacDougall. One often has the feeling, when reading such dialogue, that one of the characters is bound to burst out with “...and twenty-three skiddoo to you, too!”

If Dr. Smith could have written dialogue as it is actually spoken between human beings, things would have been improved immensely.

On the other hand, dialogue can be one of E. E. Smith's assets, when put in the mouths (if any) of his extra-terrestrials. His villains, whether Terran or not, usually speak convincingly. Quite often the dialogue between a couple of heavies adds a great deal to characterization, giving them an aura of suave, intense evil.

For instance, much of the dialogue between Mentor of Arisia and Hel-muth, or between Eichlan and Eichmil, is extremely well-handled. Of course, since no one has any idea of

how an extraterrestrial would speak, there can be no valid objections to the words or the word order, that Dr. Smith puts in their mouths.

**T**HE CHARACTERIZATIONS are occasionally very bad; not one of Dr. Smith's heroines stand out as anything other than a ridiculous paragon of the fair sex; his outlook on women is medieval, to say the least. An E. E. Smith heroine can do no wrong; she is upright, virtuous, brilliant, chaste and, as Othello puts it "... sings, plays, and dances well." In short, they are all superhuman, when not hilarious. The only half-way credible women in Smith's stories are his minor characters, like Hell-Cat Hazel, or Dessa Desplaines, the innocent (?) zwilnik.

The characterizations of his heroes often out-Homer Homer; but, again, Dr. Smith's extraterrestrials stand out very clearly indeed. To them he had the knack to give a sharply delineated, well-etched outline... the reader can evoke a mental image of VanBuskirk without half-trying. There are others of his out-worldly characters who stand out as well, who are logically motivated, and clearly drawn; for instance, Tregonsee and Worsel; Sacner Carfon and Mentor; Bergenholm and Helmuth; and Blackie Duquesne and Grey Roger.

However good or bad his characters are, or their speech is, no one can deny that Dr. Smith—especially in the "Lensman" series—achieved in his work a scope and sweep that has never been surpassed, and seldom equalled. There are moments of the same glorious sweep in "The Star

Kings" or "The Incredible Planet", but E. E. Smith had it throughout his yarns, from beginning to end. And, most of the time, this scope is credible; the reader finds himself being caught up by it, and carried along with it, so that ten-day trans-galactic trips become nothing to wonder at. It can, of course, be argued that he tries to cover too much ground at once; but in chronicling the activities of a galactic patrol one must, of necessity, cover a deal of territory.

Perhaps Conklin is right when he says that science-fiction has grown away from Dr. Smith's type of stories; I think it has, in many ways. Today's science-fiction story tends to deal more and more with the personal equation in interaction with a changed or changing universe; but I don't think that E. E. Smith's trans-galactic point of view will ever be entirely lost. I don't think it should be. In any enterprise there must be someone—no matter how many men deal with the specific—to keep the overall picture in mind; this holds true as well, I believe, in science-fiction.

Dr. Smith's novels, then, still serve a purpose. Granted that they are not—except occasionally—up to the literary standards of a Heinlein or a Bradbury, nonetheless, they are competently-written, and will be read for a long time to come. Whether the reader is a modernist who enjoys "these quaint, archaic, novels", or a man who genuinely likes E. E. Smith for his content, there can be no argument he is one of the cornerstones of science-fiction. Let us accept him, enjoy him, and go on from there.



"We're stronger than men in some ways," Jean Lee told Cyleen, "we have more endurance in the long run. But we can't face death and deadly danger alone, the way they can." It didn't make sense to Cyleen until she found herself alone as no other woman had ever been . . .

# FISHERS OF MEN

by Hal Annas

(illustrated by C. A. Murphy)



CYLEEN MOXBY caught her breath, pressed her tall, stately figure against the bulkhead. She had never before seen Holby Gradwell looking as though he had just taken one in the solar-plexus, and she had been with the troupe a year Earthtime, come November.

Gradwell staggered past her blindly, pudgy jaw slack, narrow shoulders hunched forward. Even his paunch seemed to have shrunk and slipped an inch lower; his face was ghastly.

Cyleen stared after him, blue eyes worried, smooth brow trying to crin-

kle. She brushed a wisp of blonde hair back from her eyes, swung about on high heels which made her nearly six feet tall, and hurried to the lounge.

Except for Jean Lee Misha the lounge was vacant. Jean Lee looked puzzled but not worried. She was alternately sipping from a glass, puffing on a cigaret and blowing smoke-rings. She rolled her black eyes from the direction of the port, looked at Cyleen.

"What's up?" Cyleen asked huskily. "Gradwell sick?"

Jean Lee sat forward in the plush chair. "How do I know?" She lifted plump shoulders and let them fall. "If he is, every male aboard ship is sick."

"Space-sickness?"

Jean Lee frowned. "No, dearie. We're not hopping about the cosmos with a bunch of jive-jerries who get butterfly bellies every time we alter course. You know better than that."

"Then what?"

"Look, honey: men get upset about things that don't bother us. We're tougher than men, but they don't know it. If they think something is wrong, they're not going to tell us; they don't want to frighten us. They've got some deep-rooted instinct which makes them want to protect you and me and every female aboard. It's just the way men are. And take it from me, honey, you'd better go along with the idea. If men didn't feel that way about women, we wouldn't be worth a snap of my fingers."

"But I don't understand," Cyleen persisted. "Gradwell almost walked over me. He looked stunned; I don't think he even saw me."

Jean Lee shrugged. "Go ask your Jack Roland. Maybe you can make him talk."

Color rose in Cyleen's pale cheeks. "You know he isn't *my* Jack Roland."

"You're crazy about the big brute."

"I admire him. So does every other girl in the troupe. And the men, too.

Who wouldn't? He's got everything."

"Except money," Jean Lee corrected.

Cyleen bristled. "If he had money to carry on his experiments, he wouldn't be with this troupe. He's not a natural actor; he's a scientist."

Jean Lee smirked. "You said it, sister; he isn't an actor at all. He just can't make believe. If he wasn't so big and handsome he wouldn't be with the troupe."

Cyleen turned away. She found Jack Roland in the chart room.

"Jack," she said, "what's up?"

He turned slowly, lines showing in his strong features. "Nothing much," he said. "Everything's going to be all right."

"Jack!" Cyleen studied what she could see of his brown eyes behind half-closed lids. "Jack, what is it? You frighten me. I've never seen you look like this before. You look—I describe it—older, worried or something."

"Indigestion, maybe," he said evenly. "Don't worry about it."

"Mr. Gradwell, and now you." Cyleen's cheeks twitched. "Jack, you never pretend, and I've never known you to lie; tell me what you men are keeping from us."

Roland leaned against the table. "This thing isn't for girls," he said. "You let us work it out. And the less you bother us the more chance we'll have."

"But Jack, can't you tell me? Maybe I could help!"

Roland's full lips clamped tight, and his eyes blinked impatiently. "Please don't ask any more questions," he said, and turned back to the charts.

CYLEEN drew back, swallowed. She turned slowly, glanced back once. She caught a glimpse of Benson, chief pilot, staggering along the passage. She hurried after him.

"Mr. Benson," she said, clutching his arm, "what's happened?"



Benson shrugged her off. "I've got a wife aboard," he said bitterly; "she's all the pestering I can stand. If you girls in the troupe don't lay off me, I'm going to complain to the captain and get you confined to quarters."

"Has something gone wrong with the engines?" Cyleen persisted.

"No. Nothing has gone wrong with the ship. And we don't call them engines; we call them reactors. All you girls have been around enough to know what the score is on a spaceship. Be your age; let me alone."

"Are we off-course, or anything?"

"No, we're not off-course. We're on it, and it looks as though we're going to stay on it—maybe forever."

"Huh? You mean, we're in a warp or something, and just going right on and on through space?"

"No!" Benson said sharply. "We're not in a warp. If you'll go up to the observatory you can switch on the telescope and see our destination less than a quarter parsec away."

"Then we'll soon be there?"

"We will not. Uh, excuse me. . . . I'm not supposed to tell you that. Don't mention it to the captain, please."

"Of course not. But what's happened?"

"Why don't you go and stay with the other girls?" Benson reasoned. "Some of them are fixing things for a party, I understand. Why don't you go and help?"

"But I've got to know what it's all about," Cyleen insisted. "I'm frightened. Something terrible must have happened, or you men wouldn't be like this."

Benson placed a hand on her shoulder. "Don't spread any talk like that among the women," he warned. "We've got enough trouble now."

"But what can it possibly be? If the ship is all right and we're moving all right, and—"

"We aren't."

"You mean, we've stopped?"

Benson shrugged. "Promise you won't ask any more questions, and I'll answer that."

"I won't ask any more right now."

"All right. Everything indicates that we're moving at three-quarter speed, but we're not getting any nearer to our destination, and we're not getting any farther away from the stars behind us."

"Then the stars and planets are moving with us?"

"No. They are not moving different from what they ordinarily do. But we are moving, fast, and we're not getting anywhere."

"What happens when you try to go the other way?"

Benson frowned. "You promised you wouldn't ask any more questions."

"I'm sorry."

"That's all right. The fact is, we have stopped and reversed and turned. We still don't get anywhere."

"But if that's all it is," Cyleen said sweetly, "I'm sure you men will figure it out in no time at all. I don't see what everybody is so worried about."

Benson nodded. "If that was all, we would already have figured it." He strode away, called back over his shoulder: "Don't start any wild talk among the women. Nothing is going to happen to you as long as men are alive in the ship to prevent it."

Cyleen was pondering this when Jean Lee came up behind her. "So he gave you that story about being stalled in space, did he?"

Cyleen eyed the shorter girl. "He's telling the truth, of course; but there's something worse, much worse."

Jean Lee nodded. "Of course. But honey, you're not helping the men by nagging for information. Take it from an old trouser who remembers the first skycan to get out beyond the orbit of Mars: something big and pretty frightful has happened. The men are working themselves to death trying to figure some way to get us women out

of whatever it is. They don't expect to come out of it alive themselves. I know men, honey, and I'm telling you this because I want you to let them alone."

"But why couldn't they tell us and let us share it?"

"Look, honey!" Jean Lee linked an arm through Cyleen's and led her to a rightangle passage with a port at the end of it. "One time back on Earth I left the stage for a while. I married and had a daughter. My husband was an adventurous man, but he settled down on my account, and made only an occasional trip to Venus or Mars. We made a lot of short hops around the surface of Earth."

JEAN LEE paused dreamily. Cyleen waited, watched the dreamy look change to one of pain.

"One day we had an accident," Jean Lee went on. "Just my husband, my daughter, and I in the ship. It was an atmosphere-craft and something fouled one wing; it went out of control. My husband got my daughter and I into parachute harness, actually threw us out of the ship. Then I remembered there had not been but two parachutes aboard to begin with. My husband knew. He knew it when he strapped the harness on us."

Jean Lee hesitated, blew her nose, wiped her eyes.

"When we got down," she added, "and I got to the wreck, there were men all around it. They tried to keep me back. They didn't know I just had to see Arthur one more time; they did know what the sight would do to me. They must have known someday that, in the future, I would wake night after night screaming at the sight of Arthur all twisted and broken, his insides torn out."

Cyleen experienced momentary dizziness.

"I'm sorry, honey. You're pale as a ghost; I thought you could take it better than that. Anyway, you see what

I'm trying to make you understand. If those men had had their way, I'd gone on seeing Arthur alive and strong and brave, and so determined and positive in his last effort as he flung us from the ship. You understand?"

Cyleen nodded weakly.

"So if these men here won't tell you something," Jean Lee said, "it's probably something you can't take any better than I took seeing Arthur all broken. The best thing for every woman aboard is to have a lot of understanding, to be patient, and do everything in their power to help the men any way they can."

"And just a little while ago you were telling me how tough we women are," Cyleen argued; "you said we were tougher than men."

"We are in the long run," Jean Lee reasoned; "we have more endurance. But when I saw Arthur last I went into hysteria. Men are different."

"I know, but I don't understand."

"It's this way, Cyleen: men don't mind danger to themselves. They face it and get a thrill out of it. But there is something deeply ingrained, maybe an instinct to keep the race alive, that makes them want to shelter women from danger."

"Not all men. Some are brutes."

"You are thinking of some of those you see across the footlights—the playboys, the irresponsible, the immature—and you're thinking of the situations that develop in lovenests, in drinking-bouts, and in the more sordid side of life. You're not thinking about real men at their best. Honey, don't ever underestimate real men."

"But couldn't we do something?"

"Yes. We could take some coffee round. I imagine your Jack Roland would like a cup, maybe with a touch of brandy in it."

"He drinks scotch when he drinks," Cyleen said quickly.

Jean Lee smiled. "Know all about him, don't you? Well, take him some scotch."

Cyleen felt self-conscious about carrying a drink to the chart-room, especially for someone else. It would have seemed natural, she knew, to carry her own drink there and then offer to share it with anyone present. She slowed her steps as she approached the entrance.

The voice of Jamill, astrogator, reached her ears: "It's so confined, sir, it can't be but one thing."

Cyleen paused.

"And that?" It was the captain's deep voice.

"They are rolling a small segment of space, sir." It was the astrogator again. "We alter our course; the roll changes with us. We use full grav-compen and try to reverse our flight; the grain of the roll reverses. It's just like being inside a hollow sphere which is floating free—or maybe a better illustration would be a treadmill. Everything to indicate we're moving, but we don't move."

"Could it be a hole in space?" This was the second pilot's voice.

"No." It was the deep voice of the captain. "Reactors would push us through a hole. Jamill's got the right idea. Besides, we know the thing is controlled; we've already received an ultimatum."

GRADWELL appeared at the distant end of the corridor. With a sense of guilt, Cyleen stepped quickly to the entrance, entered. There was a sudden hush. Cyleen felt both confused and ashamed; she hurried to the side of Jack Roland.

"Thought you might like a drink," she said without looking directly into his eyes. She pressed the glass into his hand. "Excuse me. I—I've got to be going." Cyleen hurried out, pressed a hand to her heart, leaned against the bulkhead.

"They're beginning to suspect the truth," Roland's voice reached her ears. "If it wasn't for the women, I'd say to hell with their ultimatum."

"And every man aboard would back you up," said the astrogator.

Cyleen glanced along the corridor. Gradwell was no longer in sight. She remained where she was, breathing deeply.

"How much time left?" asked the second pilot.

"Three hours," said the captain. "And it's a hard decision to make. I've never been faced with anything like this before. If it were not for the women aboard, there wouldn't even be a question in my mind; I'd tell them to come and get us."

"Are you issuing arms?" Jack Roland asked.

"No point in it," the captain said, "unless we try to fight. And what are you going to fight? What's outside?"

"You've already had a demonstration of what they can do?"

"Yes. Beaney Skimpton. Poor fellow! We can't knock him out with morphine or any of the stronger drugs. Nothing takes effect. We'll have to kill him; there's nothing else to do. I've got him in a soundproofed cabin. Two men are with him. I change them every hour; his screams and cries and pleading would drive everybody aboard insane."

"It makes my flesh crawl," said the astrogator. "I haven't been able to eat anything since it happened."

Cyleen felt that she was going to faint. Her knees trembled, tried to give under her. But something surged up from the depths of her being and seemed to whisper to her common-sense: *Don't collapse here. Don't put an added burden on the men when they have tried so hard to shield you. Don't hamper them in what they have to do. Don't fall here in the corridor where they will find you at the very moment when they are faced with a decision that in itself would stagger the mind of the sanest person alive.*

Cyleen moved drunkenly along the corridor, found her own cabin, collapsed on the bed. Afterward she could

not clearly remember traversing the distance. She found no solace here. It seemed horrible to be all alone with thoughts of Beaney Skimpton, communications-officer, who was somewhere aboard ship begging for death.

Cyleen thought of Beaney Skimpton's wife, plump and jolly, the very antithesis of the tall, lean, serious man himself. Cyleen leaped up, sprang to the door, hesitated. She took a moment to repair the damage to her face, then hurried toward the Skimpton cabin. As she passed the lounge she heard voices, looked in. Netta Skimpton stood there, her jolly but quiet laughter a trifle more enthusiastic than that of the troupers.

For an instant Cyleen was revolted, but for an instant only. Then she understood quite clearly why the men shielded the women. Netta Skimpton would never really learn what had happened to her husband. It was best that way; there was no use for her to have to wake night after night screaming.

Cyleen felt closer to an understanding of men than she had ever experienced before. They had been just males, sometimes coarse and vulgar; sometimes merely callous; oftentimes gay and chivalrous and a little awe-inspiring in the way they accepted the world, the planets, the universe as their own mess of oysters. They were demanding, egotistical and had ten thousand foibles; but in the final analysis there was something fine and noble about them.

CYLEEN started up to the observatory, halted on the circular ramp.

Face to the rounded bulkhead, handkerchief stuffed in her mouth, was Jean Lee sobbing quietly. From the opening to the observatory came the sound of tense masculine voices: "Gradwell won't go along with casting lots. Won't think of allowing one of his troupers— Says he's old and has had a good life. Says he's going to do the job himself."

"Did the captain agree?"

"No. Neither did Jack Roland."

Cyleen held her breath.

"Roland's got some idea up his sleeve. He's sweating it out with the captain and the astrogator now. They've found a way to lick the roll, but it takes time. At least they think they've got the answer. It takes into consideration the theory that space is the reality and matter is a fault in it, a rumple. It's too deep for me, but Roland's up on that stuff. Claims it is not another dimension, but another perception. I don't know just what it is, but he says we perceive things five ways. He claims there is a multiple of this which will perceive space as the equivalent of a tangible. Somehow we've got to find a multiple for our senses, but how? And who could do it in the time we've got? I think he's sweating his brain out for nothing. I think we ought to try to fight."

"Fight what?"

"We've got to do something. We'll go mad like this. We ought at least to heat those launching tubes and loosen the plates, so we can turn the stuff back into the ship if worst comes to worst."

"You mean, burn ourselves up?"

"It's preferable to becoming like Beaney Skimpton."

Cyleen may have drawn a quick breath, made a sudden movement, or it may have been the hammering of her heart which made known her presence to the older woman. She was never to learn. She stood there tensely holding her breath while Jean Lee deliberately, and with effort, brought her sobbing under control. Her shoulders stopped quivering, her head lifted, one hand moved quickly to her eyes, dabbing with the handkerchief; then she turned and her tear-streaked face was smiling exactly as she smiled across the footlights. "Oh! It's you, honey! Come. We've got to get out of here."

They paused beside a port off the lower corridor.

"So you knew all along?" Cyleen said accusingly.

The older woman shook her head. "I learned after you'd gone to see Jack Roland. Remember? I talked different after you came back."

"What can we do?" Cyleen wanted to know.

"Honey, I just wish we were men."

The sense of frustration grew. Cyleen could not endure it. She had to talk, ask questions. "Tell me all you know, and I'll tell you all I know," she bargained.

The older woman lowered her voice to a whisper. "There's some sort of intelligence outside the ship or nearby. The men have not seen anything, but a message came over the ultra-wave visicom. There was no image; it may have been some sort of mental projection. But all the men present think they heard it and then read it. It told them what would happen to Beaney Skimpton. He was operating the equipment, you know. Then it happened. The men did what they could for poor Beaney. It wasn't much. The doctor recommends euthanasia."

"Have they carried it out yet?"

"I don't think so. Anyway, whatever is outside soon knew about it and told them it would provide another victim as fast as they disposed of them. Then it issued an ultimatum."

"What sort of ultimatum?"

"I don't know; I wasn't intentionally eavesdropping. But there's a fault in the ship-structure where the ventilation pipes pass from the lounge to the conference room. I overheard some of the officers talking. I think that outside intelligence demands that we deliver one or more of us outside the ship. They tried to make clear the purpose, but no one can grasp their meaning."

"Does that mean the ship would then be freed?"

"There is no promise, but that's what the officers believe."

"Have the men decided yet?"

"Yes. The men cast lots, all but Holby Gradwell. He demanded to be allowed to go himself. He had it all figured out so the troupe would never know what happened to him. But the thing outside wants a younger person."

"Tell me. Who's to go?"

Jean Lee put an arm about Cyleen. "Kid, you've got to take this like a trouper. Jack Roland lost; some of the men think he cheated and did it deliberately."

CYLEEN fought back the blackness.

"No," she breathed. "Not Jack! No. He mustn't."

"But kid—"

"No. Jack shan't go. He can't. He mustn't. If they cast lots they've got to include us women. If men take their chances, why shouldn't we?"

"But listen, kid. You're just a baby; you know you couldn't go through with it. And if the other women even find out about it they will go into hysterics. No, Cyleen; it's a man's job, and not a man among them would even consider letting a woman in on it."

"But why not some other man? Not Jack Roland?"

"Now look kid: you go to your room and I'll bring you a drink."

Cyleen shook the blinding tears out of her eyes. "I'm going to do something," she said.

Jean Lee led her toward the stateroom. "What can a woman do when it comes to something like this? All we can do is cry. God shouldn't have made such a helpless and wailing sex. I'd willingly go myself, but I know I'd faint before I got outside the airlock."

"I won't faint," Cyleen said determinedly.

"Honey, you could go with Jack, and as long as he was there you'd be all right. But you just couldn't go alone; don't you understand?"

"No. I don't understand anything except that I can't sit here and wait for Jack to walk out that airlock."

"Take it easy for a few minutes. Sit quietly. Maybe Jack won't be hurt. I'm going to get you a drink. I won't be but a few minutes; don't dare leave here."

Cyleen waited until the door closed. She had made her decision and the decision itself steadied her nerves, gave her strength.

Moving softly but quickly, she left the room, went toward the spacesuit compartment. She passed the conference-room, glanced in, saw Jack Roland signing something. She allowed her blue eyes to dwell on his profile, his heavy shoulders briefly, then hurried on.

At the entrance to the spacesuit compartment she halted, caught her breath. The door was ajar. Sounds came from the room. Momentarily she experienced a wave of relief at the thought somebody else, not Jack Roland, was preparing for the task.

Inching forward, she glanced into the room. Her big eyes blinked. Her knees trembled. Inside the room Jean Lee was struggling with a spacesuit. Jean Lee's breath came fast. Cyleen could see the vein standing out on her temple, throbbing, could see that the older woman was working in frantic haste—and accomplishing exactly nothing.

Cyleen went on inside. Jean Lee almost fainted at the sight of her.

"I can't do it," Jean Lee wept. "I just can't; my hands won't stop trembling."

Cyleen took the suit from her, worked into it herself, wishing now that she had slipped out of her dress. Jean Lee stood as though stricken.

"Help me with the helmet," Cyleen ordered.

The shaking hands obeyed. "Honey, I never knew, never dreamed, what it takes to be a man."

Cyleen tried to smile. It turned into a grimace. "Me neither," she said. "I've envied men their privileges. Women are fools; they don't know the

responsibilities that go along with those privileges."

"Are you going to be able to make it, Cyleen?"

The blonde girl struggled with the words: "I—I don't know. This thing is so awkward and I feel so weak. Put the helmet on me, and you'll have to help me with the airlock."

Jean Lee glanced out first. No one was in sight. Cyleen followed awkwardly.

"They haven't released the interlocking switch in the control room." The words came to Cyleen gratingly, not through her ears, but through the bone behind her ears against which two tiny clamps pressed.

Instantly there followed a restrained cry as though from the pits of torment. The cry was masculine. It sent shivers through Cyleen because it seemed so strange and terrifying to hear a man finally break and express his anguish, an expression that was not human.

The intercom crackled: "Jack Roland! Jack Roland! They've set the time forward. That's the second demonstration; if you're ready, move quickly."

**T**HE GREEN light flashed, signaling the release of the interlock.

Cyleen touched Jean Lee's shoulder, gestured. Jean Lee pressed the button, steadied herself against the wall.

The big airlock opened slowly. The intercom crackled. Orders were shouted through the ship. Cyleen moved.

The last thing to impress her before the air chamber closed was the look on Jean Lee's features. It was a look of inhuman terror, but through it came a ray of admiration shining out of the woman's dark eyes.

The chamber closed. Cyleen stood alone. There was no sound, no hint of movement, nothing. She was here alone, cut off from all life in an air chamber. There was no turning back, not another last look at humans as



she knew them, no one to hear her sobbing.

She seized the handgrips, held on, fought the pressure as the outer lock opened, kept herself from being snatched out abruptly.

And then she saw the blackness of space beyond the faint shimmering light that was reflected from the ship itself. The pressure had been momentary. There was nothing now; just the beckoning void lighted by all the bright jewels of the cosmos against a background of total dark.

Something sounded. It was the airlock closing again. It was being operated from inside. She had to move quickly. She adjusted the tiny jets, pressed the stud. She swam out from the ship into blackness.

Terror racing through every fibre, Cyleen fought the stud, swung the guide, came about. The ship was fifty yards off and drifting farther.

Then it happened. Cyleen was literally snatched away from the ship. She felt the force about her. She saw nothing but the ship and what was happening there as she receded into the depth of the void. She saw the airlock come open again.

Some indescribable wave of feeling flooded Cyleen. It was a sense of mingled terror and pride and happiness at the sight of another human jetting in her wake. Never in her life had she ever been so thrilled by the sight of another person.

The ship was a tiny dot. The figure of the person in the spacesuit grew. The jet left a vapor trail behind it. Cyleen fired her own jets, but nothing resulted. She watched as the figure swung its jets about to brake. She realized she had stopped moving away from the ship.

And then she saw through the plastic face of the helmet, recognized the man, and suddenly she was no longer afraid. She could die now, or suffer whatever came with good will; she was no longer alone.

"Jack!" She was glad her voice would be distorted slightly by the waves that carried it to him. She did not want the expression of feeling to go through.

"Cyleen!" It was deep and husky and distorted. "Don't use your jets; don't do anything. Just let everything go as it will. I'm working close to you. Have to be careful. Easy to overshoot. Now! Take my hand. Hang on to me."

Cyleen was never happier to obey orders.

"Move closer," Roland ordered. "You can't see it, but I've got a nine-way polarizing field in front of me. Press close and look through it."

Cyleen looked, gasped. Outlined in the cosmos was not a tangible figure, but visible and curving rays of light which were in no way reflected.

"How can we see light when it isn't reflected?" she asked.

"You see what I see?" Roland asked.

"Yes. A great giant of starlight, and behind him other giants. Jack, the whole cosmos looks real and solid."

"I think it is, Cyleen; we just haven't perceived it before. They are watching us. We must go to them."

"But what are they going to do to us?"

"I don't want to build up false hope," Roland said, "but I'm hoping we'll come out of this. I've figured on some things. Just trust me, and don't do anything I don't tell you to do."

"I'll always trust you in everything."

**THEY APPROACHED** the starlight-beings slowly. At length one of them extended a hand. Great webs of light ran out from it.

"It looks like a fishing net, Jack."

"I think it is," he admitted. "I think they have been fishing for men. See how the net extends out to the ship and around it? No wonder we couldn't get anywhere. They can run it in and out at will; I was certain I had it figured right."

Cyleen heard something like static, then a new sound, or it may have been just thought running into her mind: *"We have tried long to net one of your ships. We hoped to establish a medium of communication with your kind."*

"You've done that," Roland said. "We have fulfilled the terms of your ultimatum. The one with me is my opposite in sex, vital to sustain life among our kind. You will allow her to return to the ship?"

"No!" Cyleen stifled the word. She recalled Roland's warning.

*"Yes. She may return."*

"Go, Cyleen! Go," Roland ordered. "Go quickly!"

"No. I can't. I can't leave you."

"Go, please, quickly. Don't answer again. Go! Please trust me. Don't doubt. Go."

There was a moment that seemed an eternity. Cyleen could no longer make a decision. She had lost all will to control herself. She was driven by his words; she jetted toward the ship.

It seemed hours. She waited outside the airlock, neither despairing nor hoping, a semi-dead thing. She had seen Roland disappear into the arms of one of those beings. Her mind no longer worked. She could not think clearly about anything; even all feeling had died within her.

Then Roland was suddenly beside her, stepping out of the hand of one of those beings.

Time meant nothing. Sometime later she was able to whisper, "Jack, you're wonderful."

"You're sort of great yourself," he said.

Then there was talk, Roland talking: "About like we figured it," he was saying. "They didn't know what pain and death were as we know them; they had no idea they were literally torturing every nerve in Beaney Skimpton's body. Possess none of our senses. Perceive space as material,

matter as a rumple in it. One of them figured out a way to bridge between them and us, and they swung a moving net of some sort of force about the ship."

"Beaney's all right now. Shock! He'll be all right."

"Yes. They merely wanted to hold his mind in some sort of field. They don't have nerves, and didn't know what it would do to him."

"You say, they didn't mean us any harm?"

"No," Roland went on. "It seems to be a law of Nature that no creature of any kind will willfully harm another except out of fear, hunger, greed, or an aberration. Greed may be an aberration in war. Fear may also. But we had it figured right. They don't want to harm us; they do want us to cooperate with them in bridging the gap. And that nine-way polarization enables us to perceive them by sight, and they've reached us by mental projections, and so the way is wide open."

Cyleen paid little attention to all this. When the opportunity came she repeated, "Jack, you're wonderful."

"So are you," he insisted.

"But no woman can be as wonderful as you," she argued. "When I think about it all—"

"Now wait a minute," he said. "Don't belittle women. It takes every whit as much courage, as much brains, as much of everything, to be a real woman as it does to be a real man."

"But women can't do things like men."

"Hold on!" Roland looked deep into her eyes. "You went out there to save others. It wasn't exactly in your line, but you did the best you could. It was great."

"After all," he added wryly, "I'd make a poor showing trying to compete with *you* in having a baby."

# THE LOBBY

(Continued From  
Page 69)

to illustrate in advance. The only difficulty with the "independent" cover is that it usually degenerates into the BEM-babebum stereotype. An artist can usually find a good scene in one of the stories if he is given enough advance opportunity; but if he does a good job on his own, as Luros did this time, it would be silly not to use it. The idea of having stories written around covers, or altered to fit them, is inherently bad. The Ziff-Davis pulps used to do this and the result was that the lead novels was always the worst thing in the book.

O yes, besides my #1 spot in "The Reckoning", I have to add that Noel Loomis' "If the Court Pleases" was a perfect capturing of the legal atmosphere and thinking, and a good story besides. Really unique. As a matter of fact, it's that unique flavour that makes *Dynamic's* personality so attractive.

—23 Doncliffe Dr.,  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Ah, 'tis plain to see, Mr. Anger, that you're a man of wit, acumen, vision, intelligence, nobility, character, in addition to your many accomplishments and winning ways.

## ABOARD THE CONVENTION ROCKET

by Alan E. Nourse

She stands as straight and tall and shiny as any rocket you ever read about in science-fiction. For a whole year now supplies have been loaded aboard her; the controls have been checked; her course plotted; and on her side, in big red letters her destination is there for everyone in the world of science-fiction to see: *Eleventh World Science Fiction Convention—Philadelphia In '53!* And now that the time for the convention is drawing closer and closer, she's taking passengers aboard—that long line you see there stringing out from her gangway and clear across the launching field. The crowd is growing larger every day, and the Convention Rocket is buckling down, ready for launching...

Well, no sense drawing analogies too thin. But time is drawing short; the convention memberships are coming in; and hundreds and hundreds of science fiction lovers right now are busy making their plans to head for Philadelphia on Labor Day Weekend, September 5th, 6th, and 7th. And for those who haven't yet made their

reservations—as well as for those who have—it's time to outline some of the excitement and fun that's waiting in the convention city from the moment the convention is brought to order.

A look at the name of the convention this year is in order; it's significant. First off, it's the *eleventh* convention of science-fiction that's been held in America—the eleventh in a growing tradition of annual conclaves to bring science fiction lovers together, from everywhere. Each year, the tradition has grown; each convention has strengthened it, brought more and more people; and this eleventh convention will follow in the established tradition, and make additions that may be taken up in future years to make future conventions even greater.

But it is a *world science fiction convention*—in every sense of the word. There will be visitors from England, Canada, Mexico, and many other countries, representing the lovers of science fiction in their own homes. And we hear from Forrest J. Ackerman that this convention will have a visitor from a tremendous distance. Barring unforeseen misfortune, Tetsu Yano—a young science-fictionist from Japan—will be among us at the convention, we hope to take back to the growing fandom in that country the story of the greatest convention ever—

And it is a *Science Fiction Convention*. There will be many, many people there from all walks of life, drawn together by a single bond—their enjoyment of science-fiction. The program will be headlined by names familiar to everyone in the field: Dr. Milton A. Rothman (Lee Gregor) will be chairman of the convention; Willy Ley will be guest of honor, and speaker at the Convention Banquet; Isaac Asimov will be toastmaster at the banquet; George O. Smith will be one of the main speakers on the program; Robert Bloch will be master of ceremonies during the evening entertainment; L. Sprague de Camp will be Parliamentarian; Lester del Rey is head of the Program Committee, and there will be many others who are known in science fiction through their writing, or editing, or publishing, or artwork, or fan activities.

The program will be full, and varied. Rather than having a costume ball this year, there will be an evening of skits and plays, put on by science-fiction fan groups, in numbers from two on up. The skits will be introduced by Robert Bloch, and a prize will go to the winners of the competition. There will be plenty of room for fantastic costuming there, for the groups

are sparing no efforts to bring their productions in at the lead. There will be well-known speakers; Ted Sturgeon and Gordon Dickson will be on hand with their guitars and their science-fiction ballads.

And then there will be the year's Achievement Awards, to be presented to the editor of the best all-round magazine of the year; to the writer of the best novel of the year, and of the best short story of the year; to the most striding fan personality of the year; to the best fan magazine of the year—and others. These Award winners will be chosen by your vote, and your decision alone will decide them, on the ballots printed in the Convention Progress Report. The awards will become an annual tradition, we hope—for what is more fitting than that the readers and lovers of science fiction should have an annual opportunity to award those who have done the most to further the field?

The Convention Rocket is loading right now—and everyone who reads science fiction is invited, without reservation. It will be a convention of fans, and it will be a science-fictional convention in every sense of the word. The Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, Philadelphia's finest hotel, will be host to the convention, and is receiving reservations now for the gala weekend, September 5, 6, and 7. Membership in the Convention costs only a dollar, which you can send to *The Eleventh World Science Fiction Convention*, P. O. Box 2019, Philadelphia 3, Penna. You will receive your membership card, and your copies of the Progress Reports with all the information on room rates at the Bellevue Stratford, reservation cards, Achievement Award Ballots, and all other information needed to prepare for the greatest weekend of the year. So join your friends on the Convention Rocket, and join the crowd descending on Philly in September by sending in your membership—

*Do It Now!*

Hmm, the time is growing short, at that; the Convention will have come and gone before another issue of *Dynamic* appears.

## FRENETIC VEHEMENCE

by Donald E. King

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I have been a reader of Science Fiction for more than thirty years now—all kinds and every kind; and now, for the first time, I have decided to write a letter to an editor. I think the factor which encouraged me in taking this step was the obvious and sincere tone in the editor's request for reader-help in getting out a better magazine, instead of the lip-service most of

them seem to employ to satisfy the egos of most of the perennial letter-writers.

I have underlined "Most", because the ones I refer to are the ones who use the letter-column to air their own pet dogmas with frenetic vehemence; and it seems to me that the one field left in existence which should be most tolerant of the likes, dislikes and opinions of others is Science Fiction.

I have only one request I could make. Perhaps mine will sound as bad to some others as theirs do to me, but for what it's worth, once, just once, I would like to find a good story at the end of the magazine, as well as at the beginning. Most issues (not only of yours, either) remind me of a bag of popcorn—nice juicy satisfying kernels on top and bitter hard grains at the end, which spoil the taste of the whole thing.



I enjoyed your June issue, tho' I thought a couple of the stories were poorly written—particularly "Go Fast on Interplane", and "Never Trust an Intellectual". The ideas were good, but I think they might have been developed a little more coherently and polished up a bit. They smacked too much of hack-written filler-material to me. I listed "If The Court Pleases" as No 1 because it was a really new aspect of the time-travel theme—well handled, logically and believably developed, and entertaining.

The letter-department was good I thought—particularly enjoyed reading that letter by Mr. H. Maxwell; it's a prime example of what I meant by "frantic vehemence"! Of course I can't argue with a self admitted intellectual, since I'm just an average guy; but I have noticed that most people tend to use the things with which they are most familiar as examples in making their points, therefore I wasn't surprised to see that his favorite term was "jackass". I thought it was rather big of him to admit that Einstein's math *may* be okay. It must really be frustrating to him to live in a world running largely on a "childish mess of 'a priori' assumptions", perpetrated upon an unthinking public—who are only able to enjoy the benefits of things like radio, radar, electricity, aeroplanes, telephones, television, automobiles, etc., all based upon the mathematical verbalizations of someone before they could be made available to the poor unthinking public! If anyone stops to use their intelligence, I think it is obvious that blueprints,

[Turn To Page 86]

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schematics and business charts and graphs are nothing more than the "mathematical verbalizations" that Mr. H. Maxwell looks down his nose at.

Guess that's enough for my first letter—you continue to do the best you know how to put as good a magazine as possible, and I'll continue to buy it and enjoy it as always.

—Apt. 407, Darlington Apts.,  
Charleston, S. C.

You have a point there about end-stories in a magazine. I recall, some years back, running a novelet by Frank Belknap Long in that spot; the next time I saw Long, I apologized for this—and he waved it aside, saying that he was delighted to be in that spot. He'd found that the lead-off and end-positions were apparently the favored ones in most magazines.

Soo, I'll make a special effort to put a strong story at the back of the book. Once in awhile, however, layout-problems will louse things up.

## TOO TECHNICAL

by Frederick B. Christoff

Dear Bob:

This month's cover was an experiment that should not be used again. It was not a bad cover, but to use such a layout again would not meet with the approval of this person; besides we get enough of those little blurb illos on the inside without having to look at them on the cover. So be a good donkey and don't do that again, please.

"Inside Stf." was very interesting and I for one would like to see it continued as a regular feature of *Dynamic*. Madle, in an easy-going way, offers facts and information that cannot help but be of interest to the fans. I honestly believe that if this department is continued, it will become of great value and interest to the neo and actifan as well, so you have my vote for its continuance.

Mr. Blish is being a little presumptuous in assuming that anyone with a year's high-school education would understand the math that Anderson used in his article. Can you imagine a high-school instructor trying to shove such formulas and equations down the throats of thirteen-or-fourteen-year-old children. Ha! If I remember correctly, it is not until the fourth form that such formulas are used; and it is safe to assume that a large percentage of Stf. readers did not get that far in their

education. If Mr. Blish based his statements on the fact that the letter-writers usually have a workable knowledge of what is going on, he would be correct. But do not forget that the letter-hacks represent a very small percentage of Stf readers. It would therefore be foolish to cater to the minority rather than the majority. There is one word that keeps many people from reading Stf. and that one word is "science", for many people believe that Stf. is too technical for them to understand.

Now supposing that such a person as I have mentioned broke down and bought a copy of a Science-Fiction Magazine, came across an article such as Anderson's and could not understand it: I believe this would strengthen his convictions that Stf. was too technical for his tastes and you would lose a potential buyer and fan. Mr. Blish is therefore wrong in saying that you, Mr. Lowndes, should assume that all your readers have had two or three years high-school education, but that is up to you.

Best story this issue was "Double Identity." Last place goes to "Never Trust an Intellectual," which struck me as being rather silly—but that is only my opinion.

—39 Cameron St. South,  
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

At the risk of sounding like an amateur, I'll have to say that the June cover struck me as a fine idea at the time. But then, in a very large sense I am an amateur—that is, while my motives are professional, they are infused with the affection and special interest that an amateur brings to his hobby. You can attribute some of my failings to this, perhaps; but it may also have something to do with special aspects of *Dynamic* that please you, and which you do not find elsewhere.

## THE CAMERA SEES MORE

by Koe Keogh

Dear Bob,

*Dynamic* No. 3 exemplifies a growing trend (all to the good) in this magazine of catering to the scientist by means of fact articles, but even more important, articles that have to do with present day science fiction.

Now while I certainly don't advocate the abolition of s-f stories in *Dynamic* (such would be tantamount to heresy) I believe we could go for the James Gunn and Robt. A. Madle type of article. These articles make tremendously interesting reading for

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## DYNAMIC Science Fiction

s-f fans, besides keeping us up-to-date on matters of reading, movie-going, authors, conventions and conferences, and (I suppose we all need 'em) editors.

It is concerning one of these, *reading*, that I feel there is something that should be corrected. Namely, your and Knight's book review, "Readin' And Writin'."

Why do you have to spend three thousand words on some Grade B book, telling us it's perfectly lousy? Out of the two reviews you made in the June ish, I couldn't find a decent reason that warrants your not dropping the whole department, outside of saying, or being able to say, "We've got Damon Knight to do our book reviews!"

I'm only trying to be helpful Bob, but unless you can get better, newer, and very much shorter reviews, why not forget all about it, eh? And one more beef: I don't want to cast aspersions on de Camp's writing ability, but I'd say *Dynamic* was no place for "Modern Merlin".

I don't doubt that he went into quite a bit of research on theosophy, and even more work to make it passably interesting, but it was not suited for DSM! This is a science-fiction mag, not a spiritualist's journal. Certainly, the people furthest from reading science fiction are Theosophists, who'd like to attribute everything to supernatural, and not purely natural causes. So in the future, please to keep these articles out.

Strangling satire and reading as it was, I noticed a minor error in the above article, "Modern Merlin". De Camp stated that Leadbeater's thought-forms couldn't be photographed because anything that the eye can't see, the camera can't. This is not true. One of the most potent activators of the photographic negative's emulsion are ultra-violet rays, rays—that are certainly out of range of human eye-sight (although some young children have been known to have the ability of seeing the lower ones when young).

But enough of the beefs. Let's get down to the highlight of the ish, "If The Court Pleases." This is one of the better original ideas I've seen this year. It's only trouble: it should have been three times as long.

Remarkably, this story coincided with a similar fiction "article" in *Galaxy*, since of course both of them dealt with law as it might be in the future.

I would like to see the other half of Gunn's great article, "Plot-Forms Of Science Fiction." I think this will also be as enlightening, if not more so, than the first part. There are a few points where I disagree with Mr. Gunn (you can't give the whole philosophy of a field of literature as diverse, complex, and continually changing as s-f in two or three sentences!) but on the whole he seems to have analysed it fairly well. (Again remember that one can obtain a Master's

## THE LOBBY

Degree by writing a thesis on something and stating the *exact opposite* of what an earlier graduate said about the same thing!)

The very essence of science fiction has been, and is, variety. Stories have been written about man conquering the stars, others of his defeat; some authors have said the world has just begun, others that it is on the verge of destruction. To try to narrow it down to any one doctrine is madness, or rather the case of the sea-maid trying to sweep back the tide.

None of us quite know the *real* thing behind science fiction. Some of us may think we do, some of us may be on the right track. Analysing other forms of literature, we find that the *Western* has its background, its locale, its dialect, its virility; analysing the *Detective*, we discover its basic concept is lawlessness, the breaking of social order; coming to *Love* stories, we see in them the raw, primitive emotions of men; ah yes, even to the fact article in the *Scientific American*—it too appeals to the higher levels of man's culture.

What do we find when we come to science-fiction...all of them. We find locale, dialect, emotion, lawlessness (although the latter is strictly space-opera) and besides this...science!

But the average North American is used to taking his doses of science as condensations in the *Reader's Digest*, or easy to read, easy to understand articles in the *Saturday Evening Post*—not in his fiction.

Thus it is perfectly natural for the average male or female to be confused when confronted with this new vehicle of literature, and, because of his unfamiliarity with it, label it something *new*, when in reality, it is really a combination of many of the things he has known before. There is nothing truly *new* under the sun. It is just that he is not used to having to take *science* in the form of fiction.

One could say the real beginning of science fiction goes back to the days of the scientific hoaxes (quite the fad in those days) perpetrated upon the guileless readers of the daily papers in order to boost circulation. All it was, was science fiction in a rudimentary form. Only it happened people didn't like it when they found out how they had been fooled.

So, where in other fields of "accepted" literature, *Love* has been fictionalized, *Action* and *Western Lawlessness* has been fictionalized, *Modern Lawlessness* and *Murder* has been fictionalized, and so one, through the gamut of despair, greed, envy, cruelty, adventure, etc., now at last we have fictionalized *science*. (Maybe it's been because scientists have long been so careful and conservative that people don't like to accept this new form of literature—more and more are every day—and maybe even more vexed are the scientists!)

[Turn Page]

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## DYNAMIC Science Fiction

But going a step further...who reads *Love* stories? We find those unlucky in love have that habit. Who peruses *Westerns*? The reader likes to associate himself with the hero, and we find mild-mannered men like to identify themselves with strong masculine heroes. *Detective*? Those with a love for the ingenuity in life.

*Science-fiction*? In a poll taken in *aSF*, the greatest percentage of readers were engineers! Not that we say scientists who read *stf* can't invent, etc. but aren't scientists *always* and naturally dissatisfied with the present state of affairs? Take it from there, or where would we be to-day if nobody found it necessary to invent electricity? Nothing for our washing-machines to run on!

-63 Glenridge Ave., St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada.

The Great White Father bends an attentive ear to his children, without whom he would be nothing, and vows to mend his ways; henceforth, if we present further book-reviews by Sir Damon, the Knight, they shall be more to a point—in other words, less spread out over generalities that do no more than synopsise the book in question. Selah.

## CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

by James Fenimore Cooper, Jr.

Dear Bob:

Most people write you letters, I suppose, because they either do or do not like your stories, illustrations, or departments. And while I admit that these are the most important things for you to get comments on, I'm going to leave them alone—with one exception. The exception will come later, but for the most part I'll try to confine myself to your editorial policy. I like it. I might even go so far as to say that it's the best in the *stf* field. Now that's a pretty strong statement—and no, doubt, it pleases you—so I'll try to explain.

A number of the digest-size magazine editors operate with the idea that they have the best publications that ever hit the local newsstand, bud, and if you don't like it, drop dead; the rest are so high and mighty that they can't even be bothered to notice a little criticism that might be thrown their way. And most pulps have the annoying habit of laughing off any suggestions that are given for the good of the magazine. But your

## THE LOBBY

series of magazines have a refreshing attitude that indicates that you know you are not tops in the field. And that is entirely true. No one could seriously compare *Dynamic* to *aSF*. But while *Astounding* goes on forever at the same rate of speed, you seem to be continually accelerating. I've been reading *aSF* for a number of years, and have yet to see a major policy-change; but each issue that you put out seems to be a little different, and usually a little better, than the last. You ask for criticism, and that's unusual enough; but the thing that continues to amaze me is that you make use of it. It's a principle of Biology that an organism either develops or dies; this is just as true—though less apparent—in the publishing business.

Keep up your present policy, even if it means increasing your price to \$.35, and it won't be too long until you leave *aSF* & cohorts trailing in your dust.

And now to the exception that I promised. There seems to be some question over whether or not try the untrodden trails of dianetics in your articles. To me, dianetics is so much silliness; but if you can see your way clear to print such unadulterated garbage as those de Camp articles you seem so fond of, I can't see why dianetics shouldn't get a trial also. If it doesn't go over, well and good; drop it, but at least give it a chance. I might say that once you print an article of that type, I'll vote against it. I realize, however—as you seem to—that our personal preferences can't control the magazine, and to use a somewhat trite but true expression, the majority rules.

I guess that's enough chewing out for the present. Keep up the good work, and you'll have a steady reader, whose address is—

852 Albert Street, Dickson City, Penna.

I think you've missed the essential point of the de Camp articles: they are nearly all concerned with matters which, while not directly a part of science-fiction, do come within the orbit of the person interested in imaginative and speculative subjects. Now when such things as Atlantis, Pyramidology, Dianetics, etc., are presented as fiction or sheer imaginative speculation—then no one should object. On such grounds, it's all good clean fun. But when such matters are presented to the public (often in such a manner as to seem reasonable to the unwary or untrained) as *science*, then deception and fraud (frequently to a dangerous de-

[Turn Page]

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## DYNAMIC Science Fiction

gree) are likely. At one time or another, nearly all these subjects have come up in science-fiction, and have been taken for scientific discoveries. Their fallacious (and often fraudulent) nature needs to be stressed.

A number of readers have felt that, while the above may be true, *Dynamic Science Fiction* is not the place for articles on mysticism, nut-cults, etc. On the whole, however, there has been a very widespread approval of the de Camp articles. Thus, it seems to me that the course I should take is to continue them—but to be more restrictive, clinging closer to definite science-fiction subjects. Particularly since Gardner's excellent book, "In the Name of Science", covers the general field so well.



## CALLING LESLIE ROSS

by Georgina Ellis

Dear Ed:

Usually poor covers don't bother me at all—it's what comes after the cover that counts; but that cover on the June ish—horrible, horrible...it was *horrible*! And you expect maybe someone will write a story to go with that ghastly orange, blue and green checkerboard! This idea of making a cover illustrate a story, even if you have to get an author to write a story around a cover, is rather absurd. Why do you insist on this policy? How could an author turn out an inspired effort from a cover presented to him with a "Here, old man, write a story around this, eh?"

A good cover can tell a story in itself; a poor cover will never deter the addicted stf reader from buying your mags. And speaking of covers, how about some more by Ross, huh? His cover-paintings are beautiful, among the best in stf today.

Your stories are usually very good; the articles on science fiction are excellent, and very welcome. You're the only editor to run them. Keep them up!

—1428 15 Street East,  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada



## THE LOBBY

All right, tell you what: I'll put the question of whether our covers should illustrate a story in the book up to a vote. As I've already explained, such stories will have to be written around the cover in nearly all cases. See the May 1953 *Future* for details.

## THE "MONTHLY" QUESTION

by Burton K. Beerman

Dear Mr. Lowndes;

Just a few lines to tell you that I give a most emphatic *Yes* to the idea of Bob Madle's column, and an even *bigger yes* to the publishing the rest of James Gunn's thesis. I also like fanzine reviews on a larger scale than you have them now.

I wish that you'd put one or more of your magazines on a monthly schedule, because what good stories you do publish are so good that it is a strain on my patience to have to wait so long between issues. Three *monthlies* would satisfy me perfectly.

I want, like a good many of your fans, less junk on the cover. It wouldn't be too hard to cut down the size of the title and possibly separate the cover-drawing from the rest of the sheet, as you have done with SFQ.

Here are a few requests for freelance contributions: get Sam Kveskin, Eberle, and Freas as artists, and Hal Clement, Wm. Morrison, James E. Gunn, and Gordon Dickson as writers. Get more of Shekley, Merril, and Gibson.

Sorry, but as I've indicated above, the majority don't want a fan magazine review department in this magazine.

I know how it seems, about monthly publication; you give the editor a vote of confidence, and say "Look—make your bi-monthlies monthly, and they'll be twice as good." The sad fact of life here is that it ain't necessarily so. The law of diminishing returns sneaks in, and what with the editor's shredded time; the increased pressures of faster production; and the increasing difficulty of spearing good—let alone outstanding—stories as competition mounts, monthly publication would more likely result in a magazine which wasn't even half as good, if that.

[Turn Page]

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## DYNAMIC Science Fiction

GIVE US GUNN!

by Wilkie Connor

Dear R. W. L.:

I was in the Deluxe Sweetshop and Newstand quietly slurping some of their dishwater (er, I mean, coffee—there's no difference) and as is my habit when I indulge in the imbibing of caffeine, I was idly thumbing through a magazine from the racks near the counter. For some strange reason, the magazine just happened to be the June issue of *Dynamic Science Fiction*. (The one with the trimmed edges and the whist cover. All I can say about that cover is that it was original. Ugh!)

Suddenly, my name leaped out at me THIS BIG. Well, maybe not quite that big, but if it had been I wouldn't have been anymore astounded, startled or thrilled. The good people who read DSF had voted that I receive an oscar—er, oops, wrong entertainment! That was pretty wild coffee!—original drawing. Umm...after due deliberation, I have decided on the following originals, since I must choose two: 1. Rembrandt. 2. Whistler. (Say, that was pretty wild coffee! I see that the originals must be selected from within the March issue of the magazine. Oh, well, who cares for an original Rembrandt—except a few stuffy old millionaires who wouldn't know a Finlay from a BEM?) Seriously, I am deeply appreciative of the honor that the readers have seen fit to bestow upon me and I prefer the following originals—and believe me, I will be equally thrilled with either: 1. Orban's illo on page 32 for "Secret Invasion", and, 2. the unsigned drawing on page 10, illustrating "Sea Change". And, again, pals, thanks a million.

I think you have a hit in Bob Madle's column. If anyone knows fandom, he does. When he visited me last summer, he amazed me with his photographic memory for even the tiniest little details of interest to fandom. I think that we have always needed such a department. It will serve to acquaint the neofan with the older aspects of science-fiction, as well as to keep everyone well informed on current events. Yes, "Inside Science Fiction" will be outstanding permanent feature of the magazine.

Definitely do run the second section of Gunn's essay! The work would be of great value to anyone who aspires to writing stf. And who can read science fiction without feeling the urge to write it?

I have been in the position recently of being privileged to read quite a lot of fan-writing. (I'm chairman of the NFFF Manuscript Bureau.) Some of the stuff is awful, to put it mildly. But, surprisingly, some is good. Marion Bradley and

[Turn To Page 96]

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Richard Geiss, for instance, write unusually well. It is my opinion that the future of science fiction depends almost entirely upon the as yet unprofessionally-published fans. That's why I believe that any on-his-toes editor of a science-fiction promag should read all the fanmags he can spare the time for. Sooner or later he will be rewarded with a "find" that will start another new writer on the way to fame.

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Orban did both of your selections; credit-line was omitted for "Sea Change", due to rocks in the editorial head.

You know, I rather think that a straight list of science-fiction authors who came up from the ranks—either the letter columns alone, or the fan orbit—would really be impressive. The latest I know of is the veteran fan, Harry Warner, Jr., whose first story, "Cold War" hit the jackpot in our March issue of *Future*.

Publication in a reasonably good-looking fan magazine can be encouraging to a neophyte writer, but I'm inclined to doubt its value, simply on the grounds that nearly everyone involved in the production of fan magazines is an amateur. That's no slur—I mean by it that few fan magazine editors, or critical readers, are well enough versed in professional standards to offer criticism that will mean much of anything. It's the opinion of the man who's selling stories (such as an agent) or who's buying stories (such as an editor) which is most important, and which can help a beginner. All this has little to do with literary worth, as such; but it has a lot to do with the fan's becoming a selling writer.





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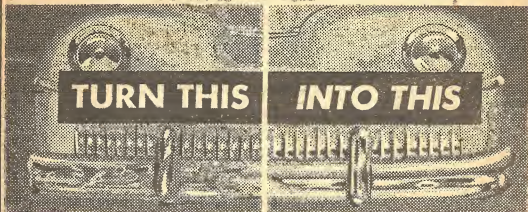
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# THE RECKONING

## A Report on Your Votes and Comments

It's too early to make a report upon the August issue, as yet, since this issue has to be closed soon after that book went on sale.

The matter of cover stories has brought forth considerable comment, so I'm asking for your votes on the matter. It isn't just a "yes or no" decision, since, if we are to have covers that illustrate a story in the issue, then the stories will have to be written around the cover. It simply is not possible for us to hand an artist a story, and have him do a cover around a particular scene.

Those of you who have opposed this have rightly stated that, at times, the resultant story was not all that it might have been. On the other hand, a number of stories which you praised highly would never have been written had the author not been stimulated by the scene (or symbolization) presented him, with an assignment.

As I've stated before, I like to see a cover which has something to do with some story inside the magazine, and I know that some of you feel the same way. But, if you'd rather not — well, it'll be less work for me, at least!

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Number these in order of your preference, to the left of numeral; if you thought any of them bad, mark an "X" beside your dislikes.

- ★
- TEMPLE OF DESPAIR (Pease) .....
- SNAIL'S PACE (Budrys) .....
- NIGHT-FAIR (Long) .....
- MACHINE COMPLEX (Wampler) .....
- THE POETESS & THE 21 GREY-HAIRED  
CADAVERS (White) .....
- ★
- FISHERS OF MEN (Annas) .....

Shall we continue having stories written around our covers?

Yes ..... No .....

Whose were the three best letters this time? 1 .....

2 ..... 3 .....

General comment .....



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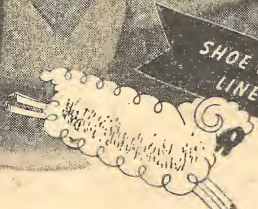
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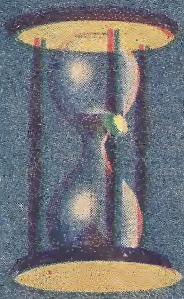
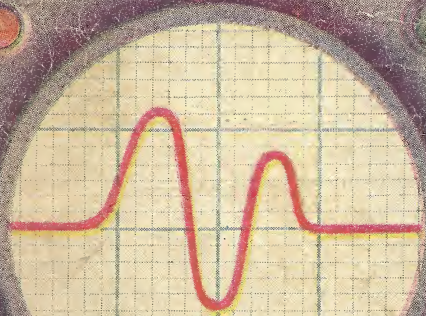
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